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ABSTRACT

This study examined immigrants' views about the United States (U.S.) and their recent experiences there. Survey data indicated that, problems notwithstanding, most immigrants felt there was no better place than the U.S. to live. Most said the U.S. was a unique country that stood for something special in the world. Many said there were changes since the September 11th attacks (e.g., the government is much stricter about enforcing immigration laws, and there is more prejudice against nonwhite immigrants). Nearly 70 percent said they experienced little or no discrimination. Most felt the U.S. was better than their home country in many important respects, including having an honest government and a trustworthy legal system. Immigrants expressed strong feelings about earning their own way and not relying on public assistance. About 13 percent thought the U.S. was too closed, and 31 percent thought it was too open to accepting new immigrants. Nearly half said learning English was a greater challenge than discrimination or bureaucracy, though they tended to believe that immigrants should be expected to learn English. Many immigrants, though planning to stay in the U.S., maintained close ties with home. Mexican immigrants accounted for more than one-fourth of the immigrant population. Research methodology, complete survey results, and related publications are attached. (SM)

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Now That I'm Here

What **AMERICA'S IMMIGRANTS** Have to Say about Life in the U.S. Today

A report from PUBLIC AGENDA prepared for the Carnegie Corporation of New York

ED 473 894

UD 035 504

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A report from Public Agenda

by Steve Farkas, Ann Duffett
and Jean Johnson
with Leslie Moye and Jackie Vine

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Founded in 1975 by social scientist and author Daniel Yankelovich and former U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, Public Agenda works to help the nation's leaders better understand the public's point of view and to help average citizens better understand critical policy issues. Our in-depth research on how citizens think about policy forms the basis for extensive citizen education work. Our citizen education materials, used by the National Issues Forums and media outlets across the country, have won praise for their credibility and fairness from elected officials from both political parties and from experts and decision makers across the political spectrum. Our Web site, www.publicagenda.org, provides comprehensive information on a wide range of public opinion and public policy issues.

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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	7
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	10
FINDING ONE: Feeling Right at Home	11
FINDING TWO: The Post-September 11 America	16
FINDING THREE: Bureaucracy and Paperwork but Little Abuse	20
FINDING FOUR: An Obligation to Learn English	23
FINDING FIVE: Working for a Living	26
FINDING SIX: Citizenship	29
FINDING SEVEN: A Closer Look at Immigrants from Mexico	33
AFTERWORD By Deborah Wadsworth	37
ENDNOTES	39
METHODOLOGY	41
COMPLETE SURVEY RESULTS	44
RELATED PUBLICATIONS	66

Introduction

Now That I'm Here may well be the most challenging public opinion study Public Agenda has ever completed and one of the timeliest. It captures the views of the nation's immigrants, focusing especially on their attitudes about the U.S. and their experiences here in recent years. It uses random sampling techniques to explore the opinions of those who have come from other countries to live in the U.S. It touches important but "difficult to survey" topics. We wanted to know the following: what is it like for an immigrant to live and work in the U.S.? What is it like to adapt to a new culture and build a new life? And what, if anything, has changed since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001? Public Agenda's purpose, and that of the Carnegie Corporation, which supported this work, was to understand more about immigrants' perspectives and give voice to their observations and concerns.

Mixed Views on Immigrants

Now That I'm Here comes at a time when the American public as a whole appears to be rethinking the country's openness to immigration. Surveys over the last decade suggest that the public has consistently held mixed views about immigrants. People are often quick to say that immigrants are hardworking and, according to one recent Public Agenda survey, most believe they are particularly appreciative of the country's freedoms.[1]

Yet there also have been elements of doubt. Other surveys have revealed broad public feeling that immigration burdens the country,[2] and there is long-standing frustration about lax enforcement of immigration law.[3] In fact, a recent CBS News/*New York Times Poll* showed that half (53%) of the public believes that most immigrants who came to the U.S. in the last few years are in the country illegally,[4] although official estimates suggest the percentage of undocumented or illegal immigrants is closer to 26%.[5] (Among advocates, the terms "undocumented" and "illegal" often signal philosophical dispositions. For the purpose of this study, we have generally used the term "illegal" since that was the term used among the immigrants in our focus groups.)

Before September 11, 38% of the public said the country should reduce the level of immigration and most people said it should either stay the same (41%) or be increased (13%).[6] Immediately following the attacks, these figures dramatically shifted: 58% wanted to reduce immigration, while just 30% wanted to keep it at current levels or increase it (8%).[7] Even as the shock and horror of the attacks has receded in people's minds, the desire to curtail immigration has stayed near its post-September 11 high.[8]

Under the Microscope

What's more, U.S. officials, in their desire to prevent future terrorist attacks, have introduced new policies designed to keep closer tabs on those entering the country and their activities while they are here. The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), for example, plans to fingerprint a foreigner upon arrival if officers suspect that the person may pose a security risk. INS plans to photograph and fingerprint citizens of Iran, Iraq, Syria, Sudan and Libya automatically.[9] *The New York Times* reports that once widely accepted practices enabling immigrants to send large sums of money home now attract official scrutiny as authorities keep an eye out for money transfers that might end up in terrorist hands.[10]

Now That I'm Here looks closely at how the nation's foreign-born residents are responding to this new climate. It explores their views on immigration policy and asks how they have been treated by the INS and law enforcement. It seeks to learn whether they have experienced any discrimination or antipathy from native-born Americans and whether this has increased since September 11. But the study also ranges further.

We asked immigrants about their hopes and aspirations and their sense of what it means to be "an American." If the country is now poised to rethink immigration more broadly, it seems to us only fair that immigrants themselves be given a voice.

Is This Still a Good Place to Be?

What are people who have moved here from other countries thinking about America and their future here? Do they see the U.S. as a good place for them and their families to thrive? How do they see their responsibilities as residents of this country or as citizens or future citizens? Does the American political system make sense to them, and to what degree do they want to be a part of it? And given this country's newfound recognition that others around the world do not always see us as we see ourselves, do our foreign-born neighbors have a perspective that we can learn from?

Methodological Hurdles Aplenty

Conducting a study of this type is enormously difficult. Public Agenda and the Carnegie Corporation shared an ambitious aim: to know more about the views of those who come from abroad to live in the U. S. regardless of their location, ethnicity or legal status. Since we wanted to hear from people who have reasonably strong memories of coming here, we did not include those who immigrated to the U.S. as infants or

very young children; virtually everyone else from a foreign country was considered fair game.

That left us with a difficult challenge. We did initially consider confining the study to cities with large immigrant communities or focusing on a particular ethnic group. Other organizations have certainly conducted interesting, useful studies of this kind, but we were convinced that it was time, to the degree that we could, to take a broader look. Using lists of immigrants provided by organizations or government agencies would certainly have been more cost-effective, but we feared that this would virtually eliminate our already modest chances of talking to those who have entered the country illegally or who have unresolved problems with their immigration status. Instead, Public Agenda made a decision to use random digit dialing, although this technique is costly and time consuming when applied to smaller groups within the general population. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that foreign-born residents are about 10% of the U.S. population as a whole.[11]

If the country is now poised to rethink immigration more broadly, it seems to us only fair that immigrants themselves be given a voice.

The Limitations of this Study

We are convinced that there are real virtues to a random digit dialing approach, but we also want to be explicit about the limitations of our study. This random sample of immigrants was drawn from U.S. counties where 8 in 10 (81%) of America's immigrants reside. A random sample telephone survey such as ours is likely to miss transient immigrants—those who have just arrived or who are especially poor or who don't have a telephone.

We also faced those hurdles found in every public opinion survey: the possibility that some respondents will not feel comfortable answering some questions, that they may not fully understand some questions or that they may respond in ways they perceive to be more socially acceptable. We can only assume that the chances of these things happening are far greater in a survey of immigrants, some of whom lack full legal status. While Public Agenda made strenuous efforts to minimize these problems, and we believe we mitigated some of them, we certainly could not resolve all of them.

In the end, Public Agenda interviewed 1,002 foreign-born U.S. residents from more than 100 countries. We held focus groups with foreign-born residents in five cities (New York, Los Angeles, Miami, Sioux Falls, SD and Alexandria, VA), along with some one-on-one interviews. We also consulted a number of experts on immigration to prepare for the survey. A list of these experts can be found on page 41 along with the methodology, which provides extensive detail about how we conducted this study.

What about People Who Don't Speak English?

Yet even readers who do not want to immerse themselves in methodological details will have some reasonable questions as they pore over our results. For example, what did we do about language? Not all immigrants speak English, and even if they do, they may not speak it fluently enough to respond to a detailed questionnaire over the telephone. In this instance, we had to avoid letting the perfect be the enemy of the good. Respondents were offered the option of completing the questionnaire in English or Spanish (roughly 40% of the immigrants in our sample come from Spanish-speaking countries). It was just not economically possible to offer the questionnaire in the dozens of languages that might have been useful. Since many respondents would be answering questions in a language other than their native tongue, we tried to avoid idiomatic phrases or complex sentence structures. The questionnaire was extensively pre-tested with non-native English speakers to insure that it was easy to understand.

What about Undocumented Immigrants?

And what about people who entered the country illegally or who have some difficulty with their status or paperwork? Would they really be willing to respond to a survey? The most honest answer is that we will never know. We did not ask respondents about their immigration status, and we have no way of determining whether the people who answered our questions are here legally or not.

We did not encounter an unusually high refusal rate in fielding the survey, something that we would expect if illegal immigrants were generally declining to participate. We did have an unexpectedly high percentage of people telling us that they are citizens or are in the process of becoming citizens, which we would expect if some respondents were disguising their actual status.

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We are confident that some people in the focus groups did not have full legal status. For the most part, they were not shy about discussing their situation. Wherever possible in conducting the research, we reassured respondents that their participation would be anonymous and their answers completely confidential. We also took care to point out that researchers were not affiliated with the government in any way.

Won't Immigrants Be Fearful about Criticizing the Government?

And finally, even if we were successful in interviewing all manner of immigrants—legal, illegal and somewhere in-between—would they really answer our questions candidly? We certainly had no problems with lack of candor in the focus groups. Respondents were sometimes heated in their criticism of American government and society. As for the survey results, we believe they speak for themselves: Foreign-born residents have many good things to say about the U.S., but they also have criticisms. Politicians, in particular, come in for some particularly tough lumps. In this respect at least, foreign-born residents do not seem all that different from people who are born here: We all complain about politics and politicians.

Immigrants from Europe, East Asia, the Caribbean, Mexico...

As discussed, this study's approach—the random sample telephone survey—offers advantages and disadvantages; however, one drawback bears special comment. In a survey of 1,002 immigrants, we can report on the views of immigrants from Europe, East Asia, the Caribbean and Mexico, but we cannot talk specifically about immigrants from predominantly Muslim nations. It goes without saying that we would be eager to know more about their views. Muslims are estimated to be about 2% of the U.S. population as a whole, which of course includes those who are American born.[12] Using random digit dialing, therefore, we would need to call hundreds of thousands of households in order to interview even a hundred individuals from these countries. Of course, we were not able to do this. Other researchers have attempted to explore the views of U.S. Muslims and Arab Americans, in particular, and we refer to their results where appropriate.

Wherever possible in conducting the research, we reassured respondents that their participation would be anonymous and their answers completely confidential.

Although *Now That I'm Here* cannot provide broken-out results for the entire range of ethnic categories among foreign-born residents, we are able to explore several interesting comparisons. For example, we compare the views of recent arrivals to the views of those who have lived in the U.S. for more than a decade. As noted above, we are able to look specifically at the views of foreign-born residents from East Asia, Europe, Mexico and other Spanish-speaking countries. In fact, we believe that *Now That I'm Here* offers one of the most comprehensive, detailed and methodologically sound looks at the views of immigrants from Spanish-speaking countries conducted in recent years.

Bringing the Voice of Immigrants into the Public Sphere

Now That I'm Here is Public Agenda's attempt to capture the voice of the nation's immigrants and bring that voice into the public sphere. As the U.S. continues its ongoing debates about immigration, national security, terrorism and even the very identity of America itself, we believe that the country's foreign-born residents have a legitimate and extraordinarily important perspective to offer. Our expectation is that Americans of every stripe will be eager to learn more about what the nation's immigrants have to say.

Executive Summary

Focus groups with immigrants conducted before the Public Agenda survey routinely showed a pattern that foreshadowed these results. There was an initial outpouring of affection for the U.S., followed by candid talk about the slights and difficulties immigrants often encounter. Most of the immigrants concluded with a bottom-line assessment: Problems notwithstanding, there's no place better than the U.S. to build their home.

Eighty percent of immigrants say the U.S. is "a unique country that stands for something special in the world"; 8 in 10 (80%) say they would still come to the U.S. if they were making the choice all over again. Just 2%, barely 20 people out of 1,000 interviewed, say they are generally disappointed with life in America.

It is true, many say, that there have been changes since September 11. Half (50%) of immigrants say the government is now a lot stricter about enforcing immigration laws. Most (61%) believe there is at least some anti-immigrant discrimination in the U.S., with 18% saying there is "a great deal" of it. Fifty-nine percent say there's a lot more prejudice against immigrants who are not white than against those who are.

But when immigrants talk about their own personal experiences, they paint a brighter picture. Sixty-seven percent say they themselves have encountered little or no discrimination; only 9% say that after September 11 someone was "offensive or rude" to them because they are an immigrant. Just a handful voice doubts about whether law enforcement will protect them. Eighty-seven percent agree that they "can trust the police to protect me and my family," with 60% strongly agreeing.

And whatever problems life here may pose, most immigrants say this country is better than their home country in many very important respects. Almost 9 in 10 (88%) say the U.S. is better than their own country when it comes to "having more opportunity to earn a good living." By large margins, immigrants also say the U.S. is better when it comes to women's rights (68% to 5%), "having a legal system you can trust" (67% vs. 6%) and "having an honest government" (62% vs. 6%).

Surprisingly perhaps, only 13% of immigrants think the U.S. is "too closed" to accepting new immigrants; a plurality (44%) says the U.S. "strikes the right balance," while 31% say it is "too open." And the major problem with the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), according to 54% of the immigrants who have dealt with the agency, is the lengthy process and paperwork; just 15% say the major problem is disrespectful workers. Only a handful (6%) says the laws are "basically unfair."

Thirty-seven percent of immigrants say they already had a good command of English when they came to the U.S. But for the others, half (52%) say learning English was a greater challenge for them than discrimination or dealing with paperwork regarding their status. Even so, 65% of immigrants say "the U.S. should expect all immigrants who don't speak English to learn it." Immigrants' views on bilingual education virtually mirror those of Americans overall. By a 63% to 32% margin, immigrants say all public school classes should be taught in English rather than having children of immigrants take some courses in their native language. Among the general public, the result is 62% to 36%.

Another area where immigrants' views are similar to those of native-born Americans is politics and politicians. More than three-quarters of immigrants (78%) agree that "most politicians are pretty much willing to say whatever it takes in order to get themselves elected," with 55% strongly agreeing. In a similar vein, only 24% of immigrants say elected officials care a lot about the issues facing them.

The country's foreign-born residents share most Americans' sense that the U.S. is a special place, and almost three-quarters (74%) say they plan to stay here. But many also maintain strong connections with their home country. Almost 6 in 10 (59%) regularly phone family or friends in their home country, and 44% send money back at least once in a while. Slightly less than half (47%) say they follow sports or politics there.

Mexican immigrants accounted for more than one-fourth of the foreign-born population in 2000, and they are distinctive in some ways. They are more likely than other immigrants to come to the U.S. with less education (35% vs. 9% did not finish high school) and without the ability to speak English (71% vs. 26%). Once here, they are more likely to have low-incomes (44% vs. 27% have household incomes of $25,000 or less) and lack health care (40% vs. 17%). Even so, most Mexican immigrants savor life here, although they are more likely to say government gives legal immigrants a harder time after September 11 (66% vs. 42%).

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FINDING ONE:
Feeling Right at Home

An overwhelming majority of immigrants consider the U.S. a special place, and most say they are happy with their life here. Strong majorities believe the U.S. is better than their own country when it comes to providing economic opportunity, rights for women, honest government, a reliable legal system and other advantages. Most say they would move here again, and most plan to stay. Even so, substantial numbers, especially newer immigrants, maintain strong connections to their homelands.

Surveys of the American public show that large majorities believe that most of their fellow citizens take their nation's freedoms for granted.[13] But it may surprise many to learn that Americans believe that immigrants are one of the groups most likely to appreciate the nation's rights and freedoms.[14]

Now That I'm Here vividly captures an immigrant population that is thankful and appreciative of its adopted nation. The admiration and affection immigrants display is neither unthinking nor unsophisticated. It is anchored in the view that the U.S. holds the comparative advantage over their home countries in some crucially important areas, and these are not limited to economic considerations. It is also moderated by the sacrifices and struggles they've experienced.

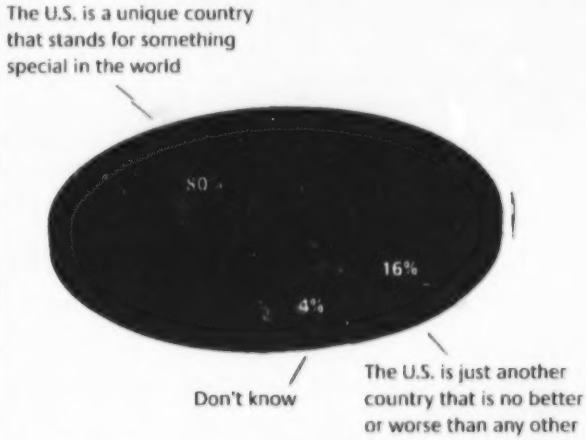
Freedom Reigns

The focus group conversations with immigrants would typically follow this pattern: an initial outpouring of affection for the country would be followed by candid talk about the nation's shortcomings and would end with a bottom-line assessment—its problems notwithstanding, there is no place better than the U.S. in which to build their home.

Underlying this attitude is their sense that while the U.S. is not perfect, it is far better than what they have experienced. Fully 80% of immigrants say they consider the U.S. to be "a unique country that stands for something special in the world"; only 16% say it's no better or worse than any other nation. The immigrants who spoke to us in the focus groups sometimes spoke in halting English, and some had to be interviewed in Spanish. But they expressed thankfulness for being here with a ringing clarity. A comment from this immigrant living in New York encapsulates the feeling that was so prevalent in the focus groups: "It is the best country in the world—with its bad and good things. We have the right to vote. Women do not need to wear a veil to go out. If someone hits you on the street, you just have to call the first cop, and it's okay, he is going to take care of you. Freedom really does exist in America."

Something Special in the World

Which of these two statements comes closer to your own view?


The U.S. is a unique country that stands for something special in the world
80
16%
4%
Don't know
The U.S. is just another country that is no better or worse than any other

NOTE: Question wording in charts may be slightly edited for space. Full question wording is available in the Complete Survey Results at the end of this report. Percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding or the omission of some answer categories.

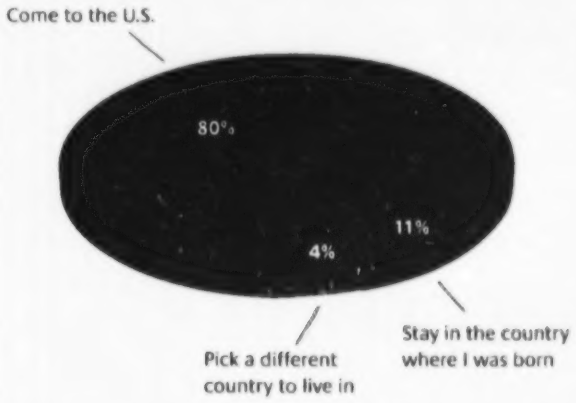
"I Bless America"

Regrets are few for the overwhelming majority of people who have immigrated to the U.S. and made this country their home. If they had the chance to do it all again, 8 in 10 (80%) say they would come to the U.S. Virtually all say they are happy with life here: 55% say they are extremely happy and 41% say somewhat happy. Only 2%, barely 20 people out of 1,000, say they are generally disappointed with life in America.

We often heard immigrants talk about the U.S. in admiring, even glowing, terms. "My dream was always to come to America," said a woman who emigrated from Bolivia many years ago. "I was 19 years old, and I said to my parents, 'I'm leaving.' I love this country. I don't regret it for a minute." "I owe the U.S. everything," said an Ethiopian man. A woman

I'd Choose to Do It Again

If you could do it again, would you choose to come to the U.S., to stay in the country where you were born, or would you pick a different country to live in?



from Mexico said, "I bless America. It gave me a life. I didn't have anything over there."

Here to Stay

Some pundits ask whether today's newcomers have a lukewarm commitment to the country, a sort of one foot in, one foot out mentality. This half-hearted commitment to the American way of life, critics say, can be seen in the number of immigrants who come here only to work and send their money back "home," or in the pains some immigrant parents take to keep their children connected to their original language and culture to the exclusion of speaking English and adopting American customs.

Are immigrants coming here to stay? Nearly 3 out of 4 (74%) say it's most likely that the U.S. will be their permanent home; only 15% think that some day they "will go back to live in the country where [they] were born." A man from the Philippines who came here when he was in his late teens described it this way: "It's like all my life belongs here. Even though I went back to the Philippines to visit, my feeling inside is still in the U.S., where my home is."

Who Am I?

The question of identity is an important indication of commitment, and to most immigrants being an American is an important part of their self-definition. "I'm American, 100%," said a woman from South America, and the survey findings strongly suggest that many immigrants feel the same. We gave survey participants two opportunities to tell us the degree to which they have taken on an American identity.

On the first occasion, immigrants were asked to choose among three statements that come closest to describing them: 42% chose "I have become an American," and a sizeable number (41%) took a middle position of "I act like an American outside, but at home I keep my own culture and traditions." Only 14% say "I live here, but I don't consider myself an American." As a Peruvian woman explained, "The key to live in this country—you have to follow the rules outside and leave your traditions at home. My food, my religion, all these things I have to make my family stronger. But outside, I have to follow all the rules, the law."

On the second occasion, immigrants were asked if they mostly think of themselves in terms of the nationality they were born to or as an American, and more than half (54%) say they mostly think of themselves as Americans. A man from El Salvador clarified: "I strongly consider myself an American. By saying I'm American I'm not talking about race, I'm talking a state of mind. I owe this country a lot of things. The opportunities in this country, there are no other countries in the world like this one." Twenty-two percent say that they mostly think of themselves in terms of the country where they were born, and about the same proportion (23%) say that they consider themselves to be both equally. As one Mexican man put it: "I think like an American, but I'm Mexican."

Bonds That Tie

"I strongly consider myself an American. By saying I'm American I'm not talking about race, I'm talking state of mind."

— Man from El Salvador

But to simultaneously cherish America and one's own heritage has been an honored tradition, and this blending is part and parcel of life for many immigrants. Many immigrants do maintain a strong bond with the country where they were born. More than half (59%) phone family or friends in their home country at least a few times a month, and 44% send money back to their family at least once in a while. Almost half (47%) say they follow current events, such as sports or politics, in their home country. Finally, almost 1 in 3 (32%) hold dual citizenship.

In a focus group in Northern Virginia, one woman said, "I love Peru so much, because all my family is over there…But I feel that the U.S. gave me the opportunity to achieve in my career, to reach what was my dream. I cannot deny it. I do love this country, and I respect a lot of the same things in my country." Perhaps inevitably, these connections appear to weaken across generations. The overwhelming majority (70%) of parents who have children under 18 years of age say it's unlikely that their own children would want to live in the country of their parents.

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Old Immigrants, New Immigrants

The connections also appear to weaken over time. The survey shows that "more settled" immigrants (those here for 20 or more years) are consistently more likely than new immigrants (those here for less than 5 years) to grow distant from their country of origins.

Not surprisingly, more settled immigrants are more likely than newcomers to say, "I have become American" (58% vs. 18%). Meanwhile, newcomers have stronger ties to their nations of origin. Newcomers are more likely to follow current events in their home country (63% vs. 40%); to phone family or friends back home at least a few times a month (87% vs. 45%); and to send money back to their family at least once in a while (52% vs. 33%). Newcomers are also more likely to think that someday they will go back to live in the country where they were born (39% vs. 8%). A woman from New York had this to say: "I originally came out to work...and I thought I'd earn lots of money, and then go back and set myself up in business...That was 21 years ago."

Again, these differences are hardly surprising. Some observers might argue that such differences point to a lack of commitment on the part of the new wave of immigrants to the U.S. But assimilation—by definition—takes time. This survey is a snapshot of where immigrants, both newcomers and more settled, stand today. Only time will tell where the present cohort of newcomers will be in 20 years.

Beating the Competition

When it comes to the following, which is better? The country where you were born, the U.S, or are they about the same?

% OF IMMIGRANTS WHO SAY:	THE U.S.	COUNTRY OF BIRTH	ABOUT THE SAME
Having more opportunity to earn a good living	88%	4%	7%
Women's rights	68%	5%	23%
Making good health care available	67%	18%	11%
Having a legal system you can trust	67%	6%	19%
Having an honest government	62%	6%	24%
Having a good education system	60%	18%	18%
Having respect for people with very different lifestyles and backgrounds	52%	15%	27%
Being a good place to raise children	49%	22%	24%
Treating new immigrants well	47%	14%	27%
Letting people practice the religion they choose	46%	6%	44%
People being nice to each other	32%	27%	37%

So What's So Good about America?

Common wisdom holds that economic opportunity is the magnet that draws immigrants to this country. But our findings show that while this is certainly true, it's only part of the story. Asked to choose which is personally most important to them when they think about living in the U.S., 37% do point to "the opportunity to work and make a living," but a slightly larger proportion of immigrants (40%) say it's "the personal freedom to live your life the way you choose." Another 18% say that "the political freedoms like voting or freedom of speech" are most important to them.

As we will see in this finding, immigrants appreciate the U.S. on many levels. They can also point to areas where the U.S. falls short. When respondents were asked to compare the U.S. to their home country on 11 specific criteria—from economic opportunity to trust in government—majorities give the nod to the U.S. on 7 of the 11. But in some areas, such as civility and the overall way people treat one another, immigrants are noticeably less enthusiastic about the U.S.

"Everybody Wants to Come Here"

Almost 9 in 10 (88%) immigrants say the U.S. is better than their own country when it comes to "having more opportunity to earn a good living," compared to barely a handful (4%) who say their birth country is better. "Everybody wants to come here," said a man from Bosnia. "It's the land of opportunity." In the survey, people were asked to describe in their own words the main reason they had for coming to America. For 20% of immigrants, the first thing that came to mind was economic opportunity; another 22% mentioned things such as "to make a better life" or "to have a brighter future for my children." As one man said, "Because you can have a better life. I have a wife and daughter, and they can have a better life too."

"They Had Picked a Husband for Me"

Skirmishes over admitting women to the Augusta golf club or comparable pay for comparable work indicate that women's rights is not a settled issue in the U.S. But it's clear to immigrants that the U.S. is ahead of many other countries: an overwhelming 68% to 5% margin says the U.S. is better than their birth country when it comes to women's rights. Immigrants from Mexico are even more likely to feel this way (85%).

A female survey respondent, when asked her biggest reason

for coming to this country, replied, "I ran away from home because they had a husband picked for me." In a focus group, a woman described why her mother emigrated from Colombia: "If she stayed, being a widow, she didn't have much control over her life. Here, as a secretary, she felt she had more chances, more opportunities as a woman alone."

In Mexico, You Know Who Is Going to Win the Election

By overwhelming margins, immigrants are more likely to say the U.S. is better than their own country on matters such as "having a legal system you can trust" (67% vs. 6%) and "having an honest government" (62% vs. 6%). A man from Mexico said about his native country: "You have an election every four years, but you know ahead who is going to win."

"If she stayed, being a widow, she didn't have much control over her life. Here, as a secretary, she felt she had more chances, more opportunities as a woman alone."

– Colombian woman

"In the U.S., they go by the laws," said a woman who makes her home in Miami. "In Chile, there's always ways to go around it if you have money, under the table." "There is no country like the U.S.," said a man from East Africa. "It starts because of the Constitution of the U.S....it is clear to anybody, so nobody can violate. That's why this country has become very important for a lot of people...Our countries, they have constitution, but the constitution is not on the table to serve the people."

"He Can Say He's Gay"

The U.S. is also perceived as better when it comes to "having respect for people with very different lifestyles" (52%) and "letting people practice the religion they choose" (46%). The pro-U.S. percentages are not overwhelming because many immigrants say the U.S. and their home country are about the same (27% and 44%, respectively). There is an eye-catching difference among immigrants from the Middle East who, of course, can be of any religion: by a 67% to 5% margin, they say religious freedom is stronger in the U.S. than it is back home. Although speculative because of the small number of respondents, this suggests that regardless of any fallout from September 11, tolerance is still perceived to be stronger here.

One woman from Chile poignantly described her cousin's predicament: "My cousin is gay, and he had to leave Chile because if you're gay you can't be open. He can live freely; he can say he's gay. That's something about the U.S. that's very positive. You can be whatever culture you are, whatever religion you are, freely."

Even Health Care and Education

Health care and education are routinely at the top of the public's list of things that need improving in this country. But when they think about what they left behind, most immigrants give these two American institutions better marks than their home country. Immigrants give the nod to the U.S. over their native country when it comes to "making good health care available" by a 67% to 18% margin. A similar margin (60% vs. 18%) also says the U.S. has a better education system. Perhaps not surprisingly, European immigrants are not as impressed with the quality of America's system of education (only 38% say it's better than their own country's) or its system of health care (37% say it's better).

People Could Be Nicer

But even in a comparative perspective, America is hardly perfect in the minds of immigrants. In their view, the U.S. fails to shine when it comes to "people being nice to each other"—only 32% say the U.S. is better than their home country. And as Finding Two discusses, immigrants are keenly aware of anti-immigrant discrimination in the U.S. An Asian immigrant in Los Angeles learned that America could be harsh to people who don't learn to fight back: "If you let people intimidate you, they will. You have to stand up for yourself. At the beginning when I came here, I didn't really speak up. When you have been taken advantage of a lot, then you learn to speak up for yourself."

This is probably more than a simple case of nostalgia for the old country. A study of the general public conducted by Public Agenda in 2002—*Aggravating Circumstances: A Status Report on Rudeness in America*—showed that a majority of Americans believe that a lack of respect and rudeness is on the rise in the U.S. today. Four in ten (41%) even admitted that they themselves are sometimes part of the problem.[15]

"Kids Here Just Get to Do Whatever They Want To"

And although the plurality of immigrants (49% to 22%) think the U.S. is better than their home country "when it comes to being a good place to raise children," it may be telling that the views of Caribbean immigrants diverge: a slight plurality give the nod to their home country (40%) over the U.S. (37%). Several focus group interviews suggested that concerns over children's character, discipline and respect were the driving force behind this difference. One woman recalled her parents postponing the family's reunification so that their kids finished school back home: "Finish high school then bring them here because they realized that high school here is not as disciplined as it is in Jamaica. Kids here just get to do whatever they want to." Another recent Public Agenda study—*A Lot Easier Said Than Done*—documented the sense

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among a cross-section of America's parents that their own kids fall short on critical character traits.

"Everything Is about Money"

The immigrants we spoke with had other doubts—many of which will be discussed in the next few chapters. Some, for example, would point out that without money little progress is possible in the U.S. After all, no one gives you anything for free. There was even a price to getting onto a beach, complained one Brazilian: "Everything is about money," he said. "Last weekend I went to the beach and I thought it was absurd to pay $6, and it's a very bad beach. They charge for everything. Nothing is free."

Skepticism about politics and politicians was also rampant, as discussed in Finding Six. Said one focus group participant, "The people who don't have money don't have a say." Nor are immigrants unwilling to critique American foreign policy. Half (51%) say that "the U.S. is too pushy in how it treats other countries around the world," compared to 36% who disagree.

A Perspective People Born Here Don't Have

Immigrants are certainly not looking at America through rose-colored glasses. They do not suspend critical judgment or overlook the nation's shortcomings. But this study captures an alert appreciation for what this country offers.

Immigrants sometimes contrasted their own appreciation for life in the U.S. with their sense that native-born Americans often take it for granted. One Latino immigrant in Los Angeles captured it: "For most of the people I talk to, white people, they don't appreciate anything. A guy at my job was telling me, 'We don't care about government.' I said, 'Why? I care for a lot of things, for the law, for propositions, for stuff like that.' He says, 'My dad had this and that. My son and wife have everything. Why should I care?' I tell him, 'You don't care because you haven't suffered. You haven't been through what I have been.' He said, 'Yes, probably I would appreciate it more if I were like you guys.'"

More than anything, it is the concrete sense of perspective from having a point of comparison that centers the affectionate judgment of immigrants toward their new country. As one immigrant said: "It's not a perfect society, but it's good. It's better than my own country. It's worth it."

FINDING TWO:
The Post-September 11 America

Half of the immigrants surveyed say they believe that the U.S. government has become a lot stricter about immigration since September 11, but few report that they have been personally targeted. Nor do large numbers report that they have been victims of anti-immigrant discrimination generally, although black and Latino immigrants are somewhat more likely to report problems. Overall, immigrants believe that the U.S. is still a good place to live—that living here is easy, not hard—and that it is a place where tolerance and acceptance are the norm.

America has long taken pride in its vision of itself as a nation that welcomes immigrants. But is this idealized self-image divorced from reality? What do immigrants themselves have to say about how they are treated and how welcome they feel in their new nation?

Today, we must also consider how the lives of immigrants might have changed after the September 11 terror attacks and the subsequent U.S. response. Substantial percentages of the respondents in this survey do feel that things have gotten tougher for immigrants since September 11. Yet few say they have been mistreated either at the hands of government or their fellow citizens in the wake of the attacks. The overall sense remains that America is still good to immigrants.

"People Just Accept Everybody Here"

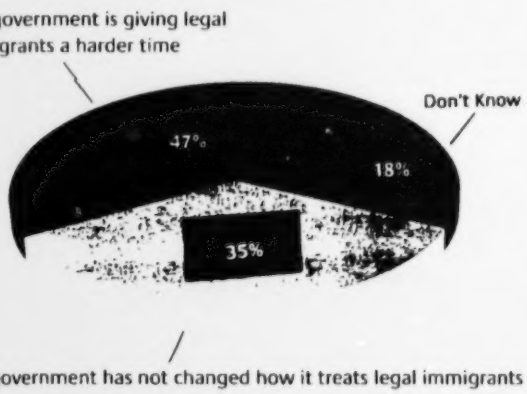
Immigrants certainly know that discrimination, whether subtle or heavy handed, is out there, but it is not their defining personal experience or perception of what their life in America is like.

More than 6 in 10 (61%) believe that in general there is at least some or a great deal of discrimination against immigrants in the U.S. today. "I think the American public is biased—a lot," said one immigrant in South Dakota. "The people are really bad with the immigrants. Two things they say: immigrants are taking over jobs, immigrants don't pay taxes." "You get into car accident; you'll see who's going to win. No matter whose fault it is," said another in the same focus group. Interestingly, findings from the survey *Taking America's Pulse II* indicate that the general public is even more likely to believe there is anti-immigrant discrimination: 76% say there is some or a great deal of it.[16]

But when immigrants talk about their own lives and their own experiences, they generally paint a brighter picture. Two-thirds (67%) say they've personally faced only a little or no discrimination at all; 31% have experienced some or a great deal of discrimination. "You can come here and people just accept you," said an immigrant living in New York. "They'll give you the benefit of the doubt because you can do the job. It's really neat. It's amazing—people just accept everybody here...you can start all over again."

Changes since September 11

Which of these do you think has happened to legal immigrants who obey the laws since September 11?


The government is giving legal immigrants a harder time
Don't Know
47%
18%
35%
The government has not changed how it treats legal immigrants

Being Black, Having an Accent

But others are not as sanguine. The experience of immigrants who are black or Latino is significantly different, and they report that they are substantially more likely to face discrimination. While only 22% of immigrants who are white say they have personally experienced at least some discrimination, the number rises to 42% among immigrants who are black. Among Latino immigrants the number is 32%. What's more, nearly 6 in 10 (59%) of immigrants overall say that "there's a lot more discrimination and prejudice against immigrants who are not white."

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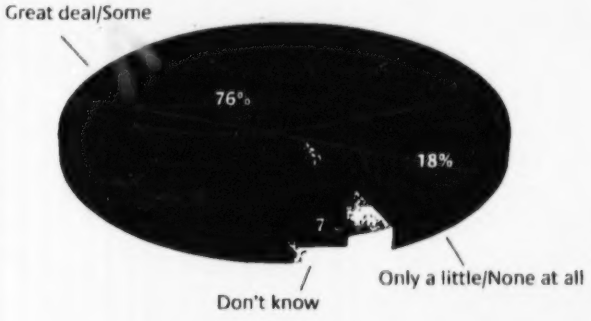
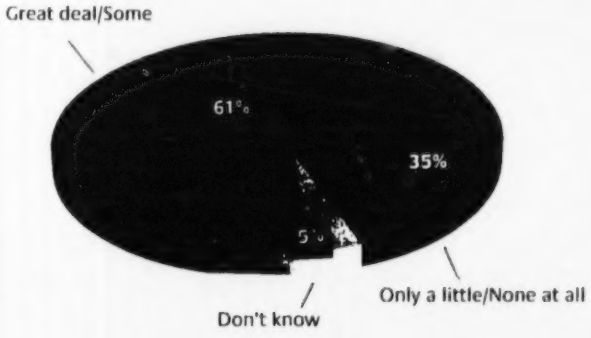
How Much Discrimination Is There?

Would you say there is a great deal of discrimination against immigrants in the U.S. today, some, only a little, or none at all?

General Public*



Immigrants

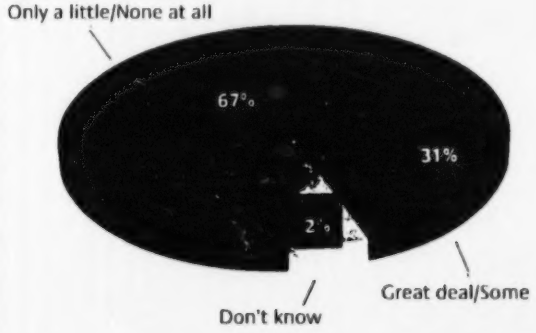


*Source: Survey by National Conference for Community and Justice. Conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates, January 20-March 19, 2000.

How Many Have Experienced It Personally?

And how much discrimination have you personally experienced simply because you are an immigrant?

Immigrants (Personal Experience)



When immigrants are mistreated, it can be hard for them to further disentangle whether it's because of their immigration status, race or accent—or all of those factors. In Los Angeles, a Mexican woman described what she did to surmount the expected discrimination when renting an apartment: "My girls don't have an accent. We went calling to the places, and I asked for information. The rent was $800. 'The apartment is going to be ready in six or seven days.' But when my daughter calls with no accent, they say, 'You can come right away to see it. It's $750.'"

A Jamaican immigrant living in New York was asked whether the fact that she was black or an immigrant drove the slights she felt at work. Her answer: "Both. They'll let you in a little bit but not too far because they don't want you to take over because of your skin color. No matter how educated you are, you will not go farther because of your skin color and where you're from."

In the same group, a Peruvian social worker who felt "discriminated by the white people" thought it could be "for my accent. They laugh when I pronounce some words." A young African man in Sioux Falls took the initiative to counter his co-workers' stereotype that immigrants like him don't pay their taxes. "People were telling me, 'Well, you don't pay taxes.' And just to prove to them, I took my paycheck to work, I made a copy, and I posted it on the wall. I'm not ashamed—I'm making this much, and I don't care if they're making $1,000 more than I am. But I am paying taxes, like everybody else."

The Cubans against the Haitians

But based on some discussion in the focus groups, discrimination and prejudice are not only the purview of the native-born. Sometimes, immigrants can be hard on each other, whether they're of a different race or nationality or even when they're from the same country. During a focus group discussion in Miami, a Cuban immigrant said, "All Haitians in Florida feel they're discriminated; they're at war with the Cubans." When the moderator asked the group if they thought Cubans did indeed look down at the Haitians, one man jumped right in: "Everybody does because they're black."

In Los Angeles, a Mexican immigrant felt that fellow Mexicans begrudge each other's success and told this parable: "A guy is collecting lobsters, and there was white lobsters and black ones. The white ones are Americans; the black ones are Mexicans. If you put Americans together, one will help the other one to get out. If you put the Mexicans together and one tries to get out, the other pulls him back down. That's the way it is."

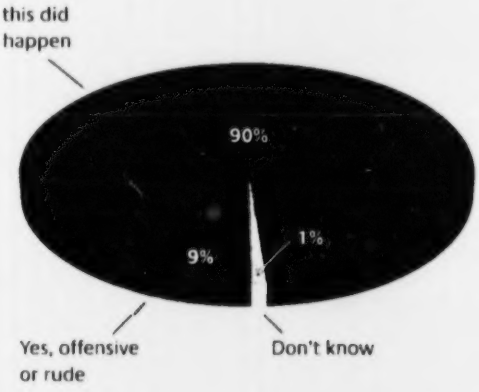
Since September 11

The realization that the September 11 terrorists so brazenly exploited America's openness led many in leadership to question whether the nation had naively made itself vulnerable.

Subsequently, there have been many changes in government policies such as heightened border security, increased scrutiny of visa applications and stricter controls on money transfers. In response, some have asked whether immigrants and foreigners are being unfairly targeted, scapegoats blamed for a disaster not of their making. Have immigrants gotten the message that they are automatically suspect and unwelcome?

How Much Scapegoating?

After September 11, was anyone offensive or rude to you because they saw you as an immigrant, or did this not happen to you?



The plurality (47%) says that the government is "giving a harder time" to "immigrants who obey the laws and are here legally" since September 11, while 35% say there has been no change. Half (50%) think the government has become a lot stricter about enforcing immigration laws since the attacks, with another 25% saying the government has become a little stricter.

Few feel they've been targeted since September 11: 9% feel that the police or law enforcement officials have been watching them more closely or picking on them because they're immigrants, but an overwhelming 90% say this has not happened. Only 9% say someone has been "offensive or rude" to them because they are immigrants, while 90% say this has not happened. Some talked about subtle changes. A man originally from Pakistan said, "I haven't faced anything negative directly, but I feel like I have to give an explanation…Well, you know, Pakistan, we're not the ones who are doing it. We're the ones that are helping. It's right next door."

Will the Police Be There?

Nor has increased enforcement of immigration laws meant that immigrants feel the police are not on their side. Almost 9 in 10 (87%) agree with the statement that "I can trust the police to protect me and my family," with 60% strongly agreeing. Black immigrants (71%) are less likely to agree that the police are on their side.

Of course a key question is whether Middle Easterners are experiencing mistreatment as a result of September 11. Many reports suggest that this may be the case.[17] It is very risky to draw conclusions from this study since only 58 of the 1,002 respondents are of Middle Eastern origins. An admittedly speculative look at the 58 respondents reveals some counterintuitive results. For example, only 2% feel law enforcement officials have watched them more carefully since September 11. While 16% do say someone was offensive or rude to them after September 11, 21% also say someone was especially kind to them. An Arab man talked about more subtle change: "It got harder after September 11, I think. Personally, I felt a discrimination [sic] because accent wasn't an issue before… Before September 11, we would be speaking Arabic and nobody would care. After September 11, you speak it and you could feel that it's tense."

Caribbean and Latin American Immigrants

The post-September 11 tightening of the nation's borders and policies appears to loom larger for Caribbean and Latino immigrants than for immigrants from other regions. Most Caribbean (60%) and Latin American immigrants (57%) say the government has become a lot stricter about enforcing immigration laws. Most Latin American immigrants (60%) also say the government is giving legal immigrants a harder time since September 11. Latin American (14%) and Caribbean (12%) immigrants are even more likely to feel that law enforcement is watching or picking on them since the attack.

"I haven't faced anything negative directly, but I feel like I have to give an explanation… Well, you know, Pakistan, we're not the ones who are doing it. We're the ones that are helping…"

– Man from Pakistan

Little Pressure to Jettison Their Traditions

When all is said and done, however, most immigrants are still likely to say that life in their new country is comfortable. A substantial majority (61%) of immigrants say they personally find living in the U.S. easy, rather than hard (36%). What's more, most feel little pressure to jettison attachment to their original home and customs in return for acceptance in the U.S. More than 8 in 10 (81%) agree with the statement that "It's easy for me to hold on to my culture and traditions in the U.S.," with 55% strongly agreeing.

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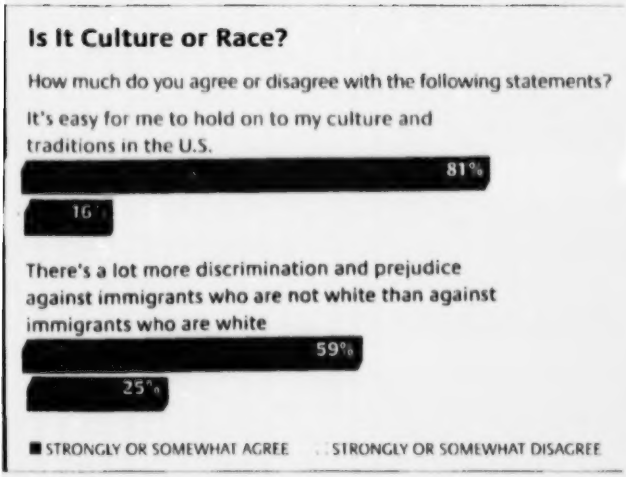
Is It Culture or Race?
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
It's easy for me to hold on to my culture and traditions in the U.S.
81%
16
There's a lot more discrimination and prejudice against immigrants who are not white than against immigrants who are white
59%
25%
STRONGLY OR SOMEWHAT AGREE
STRONGLY OR SOMEWHAT DISAGREE

These relatively positive attitudes and experiences do not seem driven by a polite reluctance on the part of immigrants to speak badly of their new home. To the contrary, immigrants in the focus groups freely shared stories about slights and incidents of unfair treatment.

"All the World in New York"

Immigrants still see the U.S. as a place where tolerance and acceptance are the norm. They are more likely, for example, to say that the U.S. is better than their birth country when it comes to treating new immigrants well—a 47% to 14% margin (27% say they're about the same). A Frenchwoman living in New York City said, "When I came here I was amazed to see all the world in New York. All the nationalities, all the people from all over the world…It was like a wonderful world where everybody lives together. I am very well accepted here in New York, much more than I was in France, talking about racism and all that."

Moreover, it is clear that immigrants have themselves absorbed, or brought with them, a developed sense of tolerance. Fully 84% say respecting people from different racial or ethnic backgrounds is an extremely important obligation of immigrants when they come to live in the U.S.

Comfort in Numbers

The old truism that immigrants tend to live near other immigrants still holds: 70% of the nation's foreign-born live in six states; 81% live in 7% of the nation's counties.[18] It was clear in the focus groups that immigrants in large cities like Miami or New York or the D.C. area felt they had some advantages because they were among plenty of other immigrants. To be a Cuban immigrant in Miami, for example, afforded a certain comfort level according to this woman: "The Cuban community helps each other," she said. Plus, she added, "You walk into a restaurant and you're going to find everybody there speaks Spanish…Most of them are Cubans."

An Arab immigrant in the D.C. area said, "It really depends on the geographical area you are in. In metropolitan Washington, D.C., it's not a big deal—color, race. It's even an advantage; you've got people from all over the world in this part of the country. But I think if you were to go to other parts of the country, it might be a bit different." An African immigrant in the more homogenous community of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, seconded that notion: "In this part of the country, from my experience, there is prejudice toward the immigrants. I experienced it myself just because I have an accent and because I'm not American. I know that's not the case in New York. If here in stores people are talking in their own language, they get looked at kind of under the eye. Lots of prejudice. In New York people are always talking in different languages. It's no big deal there. But here, it is a big deal."

December 1941, September 2001

There have been many comparisons between September 11 and Pearl Harbor, including whether America's treatment of its Japanese population would be replicated in its treatment of immigrants from the Middle East. Although in this survey it would appear that Caribbean (mostly black) and Latin American immigrants are feeling more pressures than Arab Americans, it is hard to dismiss such concerns. A May 2002 Zogby International survey of Arab Americans reported that 1 in 5 has personally experienced discrimination since September 11.[19] In the wake of the terror attacks and reports of rising anti-Muslim incidents, President Bush made highly publicized efforts to reassure Arab Americans and American Muslims of their safety.

The recollections of an Egyptian man interviewed in New York are instructive in this regard, if only because they capture the capacity of people to descend to stereotypes—and to transcend them. Right after September 11, a friend of his who was visiting was attacked because he was an Arab. "People ask him what time is it. And they say, 'Are you an Arab?' He says, 'Yes, I'm an Arab.' And they start cursing him and spit in his face, kicking him, beat him up. The guy, next day, he put his clothes in his luggage and went home."

But what also stayed with the man telling the story were his neighbors' reactions. "I was really ashamed for what happened [the terror attacks]. That's not in the Muslim religion to kill innocent people, to destroy civilian buildings. How are the people going to react to me? But I find out, really I'm home. Because all my neighbors come to ask me am I all right. 'Everything is good? Anybody bother you?' They didn't accuse me. It's like it's my family. Like this is my country."

FINDING THREE:
Bureaucracy and Paperwork but Little Abuse

Most immigrants report that the immigrants they know are here legally and few believe the U.S. is too closed to newcomers. Strong majorities consider the rules for entering the country basically fair, and although they complain about paperwork and delays at INS, the agency gets surprisingly good reviews. Almost half say they've had an overall positive experience with the INS and most say that INS workers are usually respectful and helpful.

Hyperbole, outrage and disaster typically drive mass media news coverage about many issues, including immigration. Whether it's the INS being assailed for yet another major blunder or desperate people who risk drowning or worse to make it to U.S. shores, one might easily get the impression that the nation's system for handling immigration is out of control.

Stories like these may make headlines, but the findings in this chapter suggest something quite different. From the perspective of immigrants, immigration in this country is under control, and their dealings with INS are generally routine and uneventful. What many do complain about is a cumbersome, overly bureaucratic process where information is sometimes difficult to get a handle on. Perhaps most interesting of all, many immigrants give the INS good marks for being respectful and fair, even as they note other shortcomings.

Immigration in Balance

Those who advocate for immigrants may fear that Americans have pulled back from the willingness to receive newcomers because of national security concerns. When the general public was polled in 2000, 7% said the U.S. was too closed to immigrants, 37% said the balance was right and a slight majority (51%) said the U.S. was too open.[20] One might expect the immigrants in this study to stand diametrically opposite on this point, but they're not. Only 13% think the U.S. is too closed when it comes to accepting new immigrants. A plurality (44%) believes it strikes the right balance, and 31% even think it is too open. Immigrants from Mexico—whose views are discussed more fully in Finding Seven—are slightly more likely (22%) to say the country is too closed to immigrants. Furthermore, more than 3 out of 4 (76%) of those who have had personal dealings with the INS in recent years consider the rules and regulations governing entry to the U.S. to be basically fair.

Is the U.S. Too Open?

When it comes to immigration in the U.S., do you think that our country is too open to immigrants, too closed, or do we strike the right balance in accepting immigrants?

% OF RESPONDENTS WHO SAY:	GENERAL PUBLIC*	IMMIGRANTS
Too open	51%	31%
Strikes the right balance	37%	44%
Too closed	7%	13%

*Source: NBC News/*Wall Street Journal*, March 2-March 5, 2000.

"Americans Have to Protect Their Country"

To have almost 1 in 3 (31%) immigrants holding the view that the U.S. is too quick to open its doors to foreigners is surprising. Do those who have reaped the benefits of America's openness want to deny the same opportunities to others?

First, as previously noted, immigrants can sometimes be hard on each other. For some this translates into an "us vs. them" mentality, with old-timers griping that newer arrivals are too eager to take advantage of the system's benefits. Nearly half (48%) of immigrants who arrived before 1970 say the U.S. is too open to immigrants. "The new immigrants that come here, they want to get everything, and they want to apply for every benefit, food stamps and all that. Old immigrants, they never think that," said one long-established Filipino immigrant in New York City.

Second, September 11 probably enhanced immigrants' protective feelings toward America and a sense that greater vigilance is necessary. "Americans have to protect their country, and I think [immigrating] should get harder, because it's unfair that [Americans] have to receive so many people," said a Chilean woman living in Miami. "Why do Americans have to pay for the situations in other countries? Now with the whole thing about September 11, there are more reasons."

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Border Control

But immigrants do not believe that the U.S. has lost control of its borders or that illegal immigration is an overwhelming problem. More than 7 in 10 (71%) say that most of the foreign-born people they know are here legally; only 17% say that most are not. A plurality (47%) of our survey respondents reject the statement that "It's easy for immigrants to come to the U.S. illegally and live here without getting caught." A smaller proportion (37%) does agree, however, and 15% say they don't know enough to say.

A man in Los Angeles told us, "If you don't have your legal papers, it's hard. I know a family and it's hard for the kids, it's hard for the parents. They are always thinking, 'What's going to happen in the future?'" Mexican immigrants are even more likely (58%) to reject the statement that it's easy to come and live in the U.S. without getting caught (see Finding Seven).

Bureaucracy, Paperwork and Delay

Immigrants' main complaint about the INS is not that immigration officers are out to get them or that they are treated in a second-class manner. Rather, their real concerns are over negotiating the bureaucracy, the paperwork and the time delays.

"Some of them are courteous, some are not...But it's like customer service everywhere. Some woke up on the wrong side of the bed."

– Latino woman

More immigrants (38%) say that when they first came to the U.S. it was harder for them to deal with the paperwork regarding their immigration status than it was to find work (33%) or to deal with discrimination and prejudice (13%). In their focus on paperwork, they have a high-level ally. INS Commissioner James Ziglar, defending the agency from critics after a number of highly visible blunders concerning the immigration status of the September 11 hijackers, admitted that, "We have an overly burdensome, an overly bloated, bureaucratic process there."[21]

Give the INS a B+

In what is certainly positive news for the INS, most immigrants give the agency relatively good marks. Immigrants are more than twice as likely to have a favorable (57%) rather than unfavorable (27%) opinion of the INS, which is notably better than the 42% favorable rating from the public at large.[22] Of those who've had experience with the INS, only 12% say it was generally negative, compared to almost half (48%) who say their experience was generally positive and 35% who say it was somewhere in the middle.

The Good and the Bad at the INS

% of immigrants who say:

Pluses:	
The rules and regulations of the INS are basically fair *	76%
They have not been treated in a rude or disrespectful manner by an INS worker *	75%
INS workers are usually respectful and do their best to help new immigrants *	63%
They have a favorable opinion about the INS	57%
Minuses:	
They have not had an INS worker go out of their way to help them *	69%
The process is too long and there's too much paperwork *	54%
Dealing with the INS is harder now than when they first came to the U.S. **	42%

** Base: Dealt with the INS within the last 10 years [n=562]*

*** Base: Came to live in U.S. before 1990 and has dealt with INS directly [n=533]*

Media stories about immigrants getting blatantly unfair or heartless treatment are hard to forget, and some may wonder whether immigrants in this survey were reluctant to be frank for fear of retribution. Throughout the survey, special efforts were made to assure respondents of the confidentiality and anonymity of their answers. More importantly, the survey addressed INS issues from several different angles and lines of questioning, and the results were consistent. Finally, there was little apprehension detectable in the focus groups, where some immigrants were even candid enough to talk about overstaying their visas.

Long, Drawn Out Process

In an effort to get a fair reading of immigrants' experiences with the INS, we paid special attention to those who had relatively recent contact with the agency—asking the 57% of the sample who had direct experience with the INS within the last 10 years specific questions about efficiency, customer service and ease of getting information from that agency.*

The most common complaint described by this group of immigrants was the long, drawn out and needless amount of time and paperwork spent on getting the most simple of things done. Asked to choose the biggest problem with the INS—the process, the personnel or the policies—a majority (54%) choose "the process is too long and there's too much

*Unless otherwise indicated, findings about the INS are based on responses from respondents who say they have dealt with the INS directly within the last 10 years (n=562).

paperwork." As one man from Miami said, "It's very slow, forget about it." Far fewer point to "workers who are disrespectful and unhelpful" (15%) or to "laws and regulations that are unfair" (6%). Notably, 15% say there are no serious problems with the INS.

"It's Like a Meat Factory"

With the INS handling more than 510 million inspections of citizens and aliens for entry into the U.S. in 2001,[21] there would seem to be millions of opportunities for INS employees to leave bad feelings behind. But this does not seem to be the case for the majority of immigrants. More than 6 in 10 (63%) say that in general INS workers "are usually respectful and do their best to help new immigrants," compared to 22% who say they tend to be disrespectful and unhelpful. Immigrants are slightly less likely to say that an INS worker has treated them in a "rude or disrespectful manner" (23%) than they are to say one "has gone out of their way" to help them (27%). "Some of them are courteous, some are not," commented a Miami woman. "But it's like customer service everywhere. Some woke up on the wrong side of the bed. The problem is, it's like a meat factory. The volume is so intense." As one newly naturalized U.S. citizen explained: "I can understand, because you have about 200 people waiting for you, and you've got five, six people working there. It must be very stressful job for them. So, at the best, they just won't yell at you."

Now It's Harder

Nevertheless, things have changed and become tougher according to a plurality of older immigrants. Of those who came to the U.S. before 1990 and who have had at least some interaction with the INS (slightly more than half the sample), 42% say it's harder to deal with the agency now compared to when they first arrived, versus 17% who say it's easier now and 21% who say it's about the same. According to one Latino immigrant in Miami, "Fifty years ago it was much easier for the immigrants to get their papers. Now it's harder."

"It Was Just Lying on Someone's Desk"

What's more, good customer service in some parts of the country does not mean you're going to get it everywhere, as Public Agenda discovered in the focus groups. In New York, Los Angeles, Miami and Sioux Falls, there were very few complaints about the immigration process—other than it takes too long—or about INS employees. But Alexandria, Virginia, was a different story. One young man from Pakistan said, "My experience with INS. I would change everything from the time I entered to the time I left."

A man from India described what happened to him: "I was not sure what was happening with my application. [I found out] it was just lying on someone's desk and he goes on vacation for four months—that's what they say. If someone goes on vacation, it remains on his desk. It doesn't get transferred to anyone." Later in the conversation, he went on to say how much trouble he had trying to contact the INS by phone. "If you can get through that line, you should play the lottery, because you have more chances at winning the lottery than getting through." Views are almost evenly divided on whether it is easy (48%) or hard (45%) "to get information and answers about immigration and naturalization issues from the INS."

The Least of Their Worries?

Contrary to its alternating image as big brother/bumbling fool, the reality appears to be that immigrant dealings with the INS are for the most part routine and uneventful—but drawn out. For many immigrants, the INS looms large only upon arrival in the U.S. and then perhaps when citizenship is pursued. Given all the things that newcomers to the U.S. must deal with, the INS may be the least of their worries.

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FINDING FOUR:
An Obligation to Learn English

Immigrants believe that learning to speak English is key to leading a successful life here, and majorities say the U.S. has a right to expect this of those who come to live in this country. For those who spoke little or no English when they arrived, most say learning the language was the single biggest challenge they faced. The majority of immigrants say public school classes should be taught in English and that children should learn English quickly, even if they fall behind in other subjects, although immigrants from Mexico are more divided on bilingual issues.

The observation that the American public places a high value on learning English is neither new nor surprising. In a 1999 survey by the Democratic Leadership Council, fully 85% say learning English is a very important obligation that a citizen owes to the U.S.[24] For many Americans, immigrants who make an effort to learn English are signaling their commitment to their new nation. For others, it's simply good manners to try to speak the language of the place you wish to call home or a practical need in order to communicate with your new neighbors.

One of the most surprising findings from this research is how insistent immigrants themselves are that learning English is critical. Nearly 9 in 10 (87%) say it is extremely important for immigrants to be able to speak and understand English. Moreover, immigrants believe it's not unreasonable for American society to expect it of them: about 2 in 3 (65%) say "the U.S. should expect all immigrants who don't speak English to learn it." A considerably smaller 31% say this should be left up to each individual to decide.

It's What We Have in Common

"If you don't know English, you have to learn it," said a Hispanic man in Miami. And a woman in the same group said, "That's what we have in common is the language. If everyone spoke their own language, we would have nothing in common." A few even spoke harshly: "I think it should be mandatory," said one New York City immigrant. "If you can't speak English in three years, I'd put you on the boat and send you back."

Immigrants who've lived in the U.S. for 20 or more years (74%) are much more likely than those here for less than 5 years (49%) to say learning English should be expected, not an individual choice. It's also interesting to note that, as a group, Mexican immigrants are less certain (54%) to say the U.S. should expect all immigrants to learn English while 43% say it should be left up to the individual (see Finding Seven).

Most of the pressure to speak English well is born of the pragmatic, all-too-human desire to be understood. But judging by the focus groups, it appeared that more settled immigrants go beyond the practical necessity for English, viewing it as an almost moral obligation. An Asian woman in Los Angeles was critical of some of the members of her family: "You should speak English. I think it's very ignorant [if you don't]. I have some relatives who live here 30 years, and they can't. They work with an American company but they're too afraid to communicate, and they always put you in front to speak for them. I don't think that's right." Again echoing the not unheard of inter-group resentment, another Asian woman in Los Angeles complained that foreign-born Hispanics do not make the effort to speak English: "They don't want to speak English and think we have to speak their language. They want to speak Spanish in the U.S. No way. This is America. You have to follow the rules and the law of the U.S."

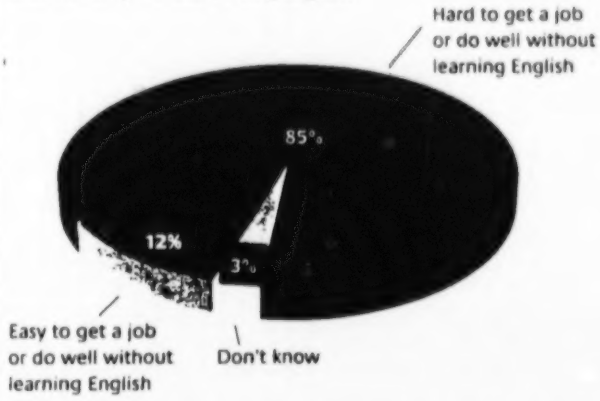
Should English Be Expected?

Do you think the U.S. should expect all immigrants who don't speak English to learn it, or should this be left up to each individual to decide for themselves?

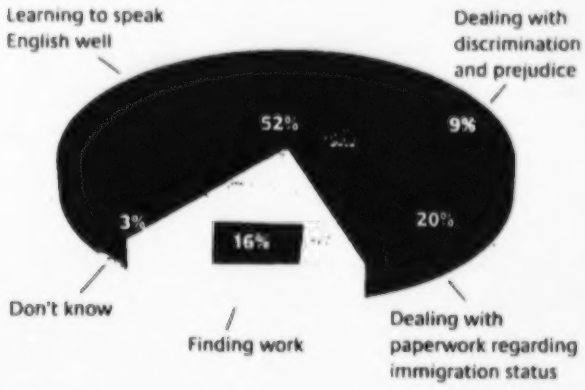
	TOTAL OVERALL	EUROPEANS	EAST ASIANS	CARIBBEANS	NON MEXICAN LATINOS	MEXICANS
U.S. should expect all immigrants who don't speak English to learn it	65%	82%	67%	63%	61%	54%
Should be left up to each individual	31%	14%	30%	36%	37%	43%

Essential but Not Easy

Is it easy or hard for new immigrants to get a good job or do well in this country without learning English?



When you first came to the U.S., which was harder for you? Was it learning to speak English or was it:*



Base: Mentioned difficulty and knew only enough to get by or did not speak English at all (n=437)

The Biggest Stumbling Block

When immigrants who spoke little or no English upon coming to the U.S. are asked what their toughest personal challenge was, they don't point to discrimination, difficulties finding work or even dealing with immigration paperwork. Instead, most (52%) point to learning to speak English as the biggest problem they faced.

Focus group participants sometimes spoke with emotion about what it meant to not speak English well. A woman in Los Angeles talked about the sting she felt: "The impression I get from a lot of people is because I speak with broken English they think I think with a broken mind. You think you're dealing with this stupid Mexican—I'm not one of them. I want to speak for my rights and stand for my beliefs." One Spanish-speaking woman described how for her, coming to the U.S. without English skills was "very difficult. I came from my country with a bachelor's degree…Here you have to start from zero, because you don't know the language."

The belief that "immigrants who speak good English have a much easier time in the U.S." is self-evident according to respondents, with 77% strongly agreeing. Several of the British or Irish immigrants we interviewed were clear, for example, that their language skills marked them for different, better treatment. "I worked in a company that really took advantage of foreigners," said an Englishwoman in New York City. "But they didn't take advantage of me because I actually spoke English better than most of the people there. But it was very difficult to sit and see these people abused… Nobody was called by their correct name. Nobody made an effort to try and pronounce their names." Several times in the focus group conversations, the moderator would need to reassure those who struggled with English not to worry—that they were more than understandable and definitely contributing to the conversation.

Without English, You Cannot Work

More than anything else, America's immigrants believe that learning English is vitally important for practical reasons. Simply put, they need English to get ahead. They spoke about English as an elemental gateway skill, one that determined whether they would get a job or not, be understood or not, get respect or not. Life in the U.S., according to them, is much harder without it.

"Without English you cannot communicate, you cannot look for work, you cannot go and apply," said a Hispanic immigrant in Los Angeles. "You cannot even write an application for work." An Indian man in the computer industry said, "I would not have been able to be in this country without English, because my job requires that I speak English. For me, English was absolutely essential." Only 12% say "it's easy for new immigrants to get a good job or do well in this country without learning English." In sharp contrast, 85% say it's hard to do so.

Even a strong accent was sometimes seen as an obstacle. In Virginia, a college student from Pakistan expressed his worry: "With the accent, the fear I have is that somehow you can't communicate correctly. If you say something people wouldn't understand you, that's very frustrating. And in the working environment it's frustrating for everybody to try to understand you."

Children Who Refuse to Speak Spanish

It is notable that in this survey, most immigrants who had come to the U.S. speaking limited English (62% of the sample) also appear to have made good progress since then. Most

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(61%) now rate their English as excellent or good; nearly half (49%) say they "can read a newspaper or book in English" very well; and 47% have taken English classes to improve their skills. "The English I know I learned here," said a Latino in Miami. "I studied hard."

But the numbers don't capture the seemingly timeless generation gap between the immigrants and their children, with the parents often trying to hold on to the culture of "back home" while the kids are quickly assimilating. "They're American, they hate the [parent's] language and cooking, they won't have anything to do with it," said one immigrant of the kids he knows. "I can hear women talking to their children in Spanish and the child refuses to speak back in Spanish; they answer back in English."

Mirroring the American Public

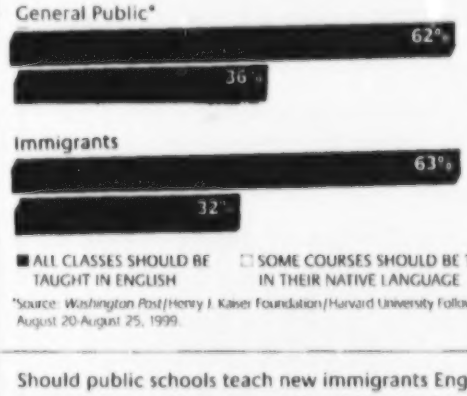
Surveys, including those conducted by Public Agenda, have consistently captured the general public's desire for foreign-born children to learn English as quickly as possible. For the general public, it is the most urgent of priorities because it is the key to progress and success in school and in life. Immigrants couldn't agree more, and in fact, their attitudes are uncannily identical.

Consider this: by a 62% to 36% margin, the general public thinks that all public school classes should be taught in English, rather than that children of immigrants should be able to take some courses in their native language.[25] Among immigrants, the margin is 63% to 32%. In a Public Agenda study of public school parents, a 67% to 27% majority thought the public schools should teach new immigrants English "as quickly as possible, even if this means they fall behind in other subjects," and that other subjects should not be taught in students' native language "even if this means it takes them longer to learn English."[26] In this survey of immigrants, the margin is larger: 73% to 20%.

The emphasis on English is clear, but immigrants' perceptions of how well the public schools are doing the job are less so. Many (35%) simply don't know enough to say; however, it should be noted that most (54%) of the respondents don't have children under 18 years old. Nearly 4 in 10 (39%) think the schools do a good or excellent job, while 27% give them a fair or poor rating. Parents with children under 18 years old are more likely to positively rate the schools on teaching English (46%).

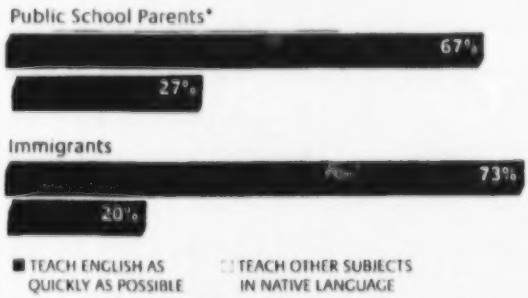
Bilingual Education

Should all public school classes be taught in English, or should children of immigrants be able to take some courses in their native language?



*Source: *Washington Post*/Henry J. Kaiser Foundation/Harvard University Follow-up Latinos Survey, August 20-August 25, 1999.

Should public schools teach new immigrants English as quickly as possible even if this means they fall behind or teach them other subjects in their native language even if this means it takes them longer to learn English?



*Source: *A Lot To Be Thankful For: What Parents Want Children To Learn About America*, Public Agenda, 1998.

Language and Politics

One of the less-noticed provisions of California's Proposition 227, which eliminated bilingual education for students with limited English proficiency, mandated free English lessons for adults who wanted them. Given everything we have learned, it's safe to say that adult immigrants couldn't be happier and the reasons are simple. Whether they are in the grocery line or in line for a job, immigrants believe they are far better off when they can speak the language of the nation they've adopted. An Asian woman in Los Angeles explained that sometimes non-English speakers don't speak up because they are self-conscious about their language skills: "They're quiet because sometimes they want to speak but they don't know how because of the language. So they're just quiet." Another man in the focus group agreed: "I'm afraid to speak up because of my English." And the longer immigrants live in the U.S., the more they look at language acquisition by immigrants as a symbol of good intentions.

Some might argue that it's the responsibility of the nation—and of ordinary Americans—to get comfortable with hearing and understanding foreign languages. But this is not what immigrants are asking for. Immigrants are perfectly comfortable with the expectation that they absorb English. Indeed, for many reasons, they want and expect it for themselves.

FINDING FIVE:
Working for a Living

A large majority of immigrants believe that it's extremely important for immigrants to work hard and stay off welfare, a view that is held even more strongly among those who have lived here for more than a decade. What's more, by an overwhelming margin, immigrants say that the U.S. provides better opportunities to earn a living than their home country. Only small numbers of immigrants report that they or a family member has received public assistance or private charity.

The work ethic is one of the most venerated and cherished values in American society. Much of the public's zeal behind efforts to upend the old welfare system was driven by perceptions that it violated the work ethic and people's sense that it demeaned the efforts of working Americans who earned their own keep.[7] Ask America's parents what a bad citizen looks like and 77% will point to "a person who lives on government programs like welfare even though they are able to work." In contrast, 51% say a bad citizen is "a person who is able to vote [but] never does."[8]

"Everybody Has to Work"

Those who would raise doubts about the commitment of immigrants to work and earn their keep in this nation would do well to first listen to the voices of the immigrants we interviewed. Through their responses in the focus groups and the survey, it is quite clear that immigrants have absorbed, internalized and decided to live by this most American of values. Or else they came to this country bringing this attitude with them. More than 7 in 10 immigrants (73%) say it's extremely important for immigrants "to work and stay off welfare." More settled immigrants (81%) are more likely than newer immigrants (55%) to say this is extremely important.

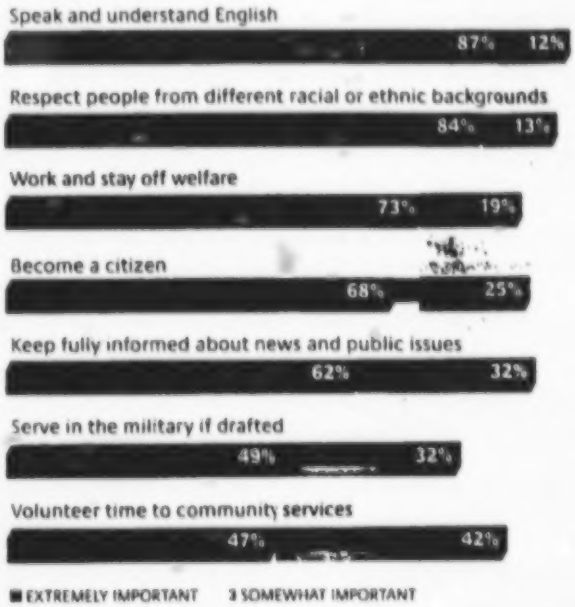
"When I came I started work in a supermarket. Three o'clock in the morning I have to go clean the supermarket, stocking merchandise on the shelves. I say never forget, it's not so easy and beautiful."

– Woman from Cuba

Many talked about the stark reality that greeted them when they first came to the U.S. and understood that without hard work and sacrifice, their image of America as the land of plenty would not be realized. In Miami an immigrant contrasted the beautiful pictures of American homes she saw when she lived in Cuba and the reality she first faced: "When I came I started work in a supermarket. Three o'clock in the morning I have to go clean the supermarket, stocking merchandise on the shelves. I say never forget, it's not so easy and beautiful. I have to wait for the weekends to go to the beaches. When you start here it's hard. After 15 years the life is different. Now it's easier. Maybe I can buy a house with a pool. But it's hard to get started." Her story triggered knowing chuckles from the other participants. One said her cousins abroad "think here is great. And yes, you can have whatever you want here, you can. You can own a house with

What to expect of Immigrants

How important is it that immigrants do the following when they come to live in the U.S.?



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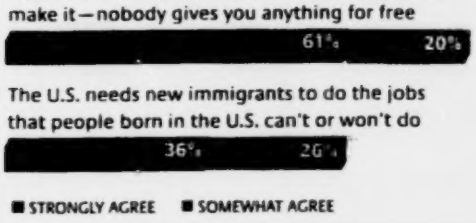
Nobody Gives You Anything

% of immigrants who say they "strongly agree" or "somewhat agree" with the following statements about work in the U.S.:


A person has to work very hard in this country to make it—nobody gives you anything for free
61%
20%
The U.S. needs new immigrants to do the jobs that people born in the U.S. can't or won't do
36%
26%
STRONGLY AGREE
SOMEWHAT AGREE

a pool if you want but you've got to work for it. Over there they think you come here and it's just given to you, and it's not...everybody had to get up and work."

Given such sentiments, it is not surprising that more than 8 in 10 (81%) believe that "a person has to work very hard in this country to make it—nobody gives you anything for free," with 61% strongly agreeing. This appears to reflect not only the perception but the reality of how immigrants live in the U.S. Nearly 7 in 10 (69%) of the sample currently work, and only 3% are "unemployed but not retired." The remainder break down as follows: 7% are students, 9% are homemakers and 12% are retired.

Live to Work

Rather than coming to the U.S. to take advantage of whatever government benefits are available, immigrants seem far more motivated by the opportunity to work, build and climb up. By an 88% to 4% margin, immigrants say that the U.S. is better than their home country when it comes to "having more opportunity to earn a living." When asked to describe in their own words the biggest reason they came to live in the U.S., 22% of responses fall under a general desire to improve their lives, an additional 20% specifically mention work and job opportunities and 12% mention school and education.

"There's an awful lot of opportunities over here," said an Irish immigrant living in the Alexandria, Virginia area. "Back home, people work to live. People over here live to work. That's how I totally define America. I mean, people over here, they get up and they just work, work, work, work. And then they come home, and it's time for bed. Back home my mom thinks I'm crazy. She's like, 'What are you doing over there? Come home and enjoy life.' But I guess I'm enjoying a better standard of living compared to the friends that I went to school with back home."

Asked to choose which is personally the most important of three things about life in the U.S., 37% say it's the opportunity to work and make a living—virtually tied with the 40% who say it's the freedom to live their lives the way they choose. Only 18% point to political freedoms. "I feel that the U.S. gave me the opportunity to achieve my career, to reach what was my dream," said a woman in Virginia. "So, I cannot deny it. I cannot say, no, I don't love this country. I do love this country."

Good and Bad

The immigrants in the focus groups could be very outspoken about people who don't want to work. An Asian woman made this distinction between who she called "good and bad" immigrants: "Some people that work really hard and want to make a living and have a home, they deserve it. That's good. Someone who wants to collect welfare, we all work hard for them."

Just as the overwhelming majority of immigrants in this sample work, the number that report receiving public assistance or private charity turns out to be pretty low. Relatively few (18%) say that they or a member of their family living with them have received food stamps, 81% say they have not. Most immigrants appear to not even rely on private help: only 10% say they have received donations or free services from a charity or church; 89% say they have not. In fact, 76% have volunteered to help at a local organization or church. Finally, relatively few (22%) say that a major reason for them becoming a citizen is to qualify for government programs.

Getting Help, Giving Help

% of immigrants who:

Say that qualifying for government programs like Medicaid or food stamps was/is a major reason to become a citizen	22%
Have received food stamps	18%
Have received any kind of donations or free services from a charity or church	10%
Have volunteered their time or contributed money to an organization or church in their community	76%

How Much Did You Have in Your Pocket?

If in the past the more settled immigrants would talk about how they came to America with nothing in their pockets, it appears that the only thing that has changed with the times is that the amount has gone up. "I'm a survivor," said a New York immigrant with pride. "I came here with $150 in my pocket and not knowing anybody. I have a good job. I don't rely on anybody. I don't owe money, and I earn it." Nearly 7 in 10 (69%) immigrants say they came to this country "with very little money" in their pocket, while 28% say they came with "a good amount of money to get [them] started."

Some of the immigrants in the focus groups, especially those who came not knowing English, were educated professionals who took menial jobs or jobs that had little to do with their previous professional work. Indeed, more than 6 in 10 (62%) think "the U.S. needs new immigrants to do the jobs that people born in the U.S. can't or won't do." There is nothing particularly striking in this downward mobility; one might even say it is a classic rite of passage for many immigrants. But what is striking is the realization that no immigrant interviewed for this study spoke with embarrassment or bitterness about mopping restaurant floors or cleaning hospital bedpans though they might have been trained for far more. To the contrary, they spoke with pointed pride about humble beginnings.

"When I go start working with someone he put me as a helper...I say, 'Well, I'm doing good work; I make him rich. Why don't I start my own business?'"

– Man from Egypt

Price of Admission

An Egyptian who had come to the U.S. as a college graduate was still struggling with English but no longer struggling to make a living as a laborer. He was now a successful contractor. "When I go start working with someone, he put me as a helper. I feel really he put me down but maybe my English [was the problem]. I say 'Well, I'm doing good work; I make him rich. Why don't I start my own business?'" A woman who had been a social worker in Peru said, "When I am here, I have to start working in a restaurant. And then I do baby-sit. I went to school, and I got another bachelor degree in psychology. Then I find a job in social services." This attitudinal mindset is noteworthy precisely for the fact that it is an accepted and expected price of admission. Simply put, immigrants do not come with a sense of entitlement. They believe in self-reliance, not government reliance, and in that way are as American as any native-born American.

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FINDING SIX: Citizenship

The majority of immigrants say they have become citizens or want to do so, and most see citizenship as providing a wide range of benefits. Most say citizenship would make it easier to travel and work at different jobs. Becoming a citizen also gives them stronger legal rights and eliminates anxiety about their status here. But the reasons are not just practical. The majority of immigrants say they believe that becoming a citizen shows a commitment and pride in being an American. Like many native-born Americans, immigrants are skeptical about politics, and most doubt that politicians are truly concerned about their views.

Throughout this study, the data consistently show that U.S. immigrants have absorbed quintessential American values such as hard work and love of country. They also believe learning English to be as critically important as U.S.-born Americans do. To a large extent, immigrants also have absorbed—for better or worse—other typical American attitudes toward citizenship, politics and politicians.

To Be or Not to Be

If citizenship is an ultimate expression of commitment to a nation, most immigrants surveyed in this study have either made or are in the process of making that commitment. More than half (56%) say they are U.S. citizens. Another 12% were in the process of becoming a citizen when interviewed, and 23% are planning to become a citizen in the future. Only 7% say they do not plan to pursue citizenship.

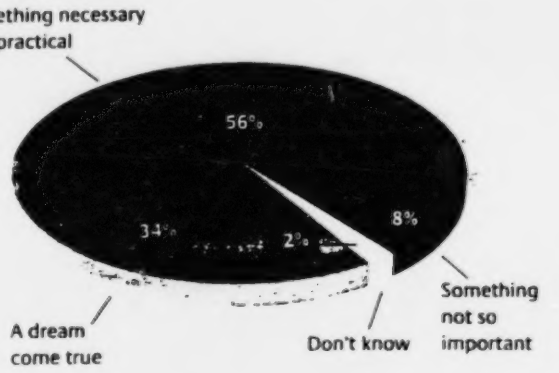
The U.S. Census Bureau reports that 37% of the foreign-born population are citizens[29]—substantially fewer than the 56% reported here. A number of factors may explain this discrepancy: our telephone survey may have been more likely to miss transient immigrants, for example, or newcomers may be less likely to have a telephone at home. Immigrants may also have given us what they thought was the more socially desirable response.

Was It Pride or the Lines at the Airport?

During the focus groups, several different motives for pursuing citizenship were expressed. Some were sentimental, others were pragmatic and many were a combination of both. When asked which best describes what becoming a citizen means to them, more than one-third (34%) say they look at it "as a dream come true," but more than half (56%) see it as "something necessary and practical." Only 8% regard citizenship as "something not so important."

Dreams and Practicalities

Which of these best describes what becoming a U.S. citizen meant/means to you? Did/do you look at becoming a citizen as:



To be sure, some of the more touching comments we heard were the ones about lifelong dreams of becoming citizens and gratitude for the chance the U.S. offers all people to join its society, regardless of pedigree. A woman in Los Angeles described the feelings she had when she made her oath: "For five years I went to school and studied. I went downtown [to be sworn in], and I was the proudest woman on this earth—I'm American. This country is wonderful to everybody—opens the doors to the whole world."

But the discussions about the practical benefits of citizenship—as opposed to the sentimental ones—were everywhere, and people's comments were often colorful. A woman from Jamaica said: "I can tell you one place where it will really make you want to become a citizen. It's at the airport. You come into this country, there are lines. If you're an American, there's no line. You just go. They don't even open your passport.

They just see an American emblem outside, and you just go right through the door. That's reason enough to become an American citizen." Indeed, 51% of immigrants say that a major reason to pursue citizenship is "to make it easier to travel in and out of the U.S."

"I Wanted to Make a Difference"

Becoming citizens, of course, bestows immigrants with the practical right to vote. But the desire to have this right is more a signal of accepting a responsibility than it is a desire to cash in on an advantage. The right to vote is viewed as so important that when we asked immigrants to select among eight reasons for becoming a citizen, gaining the right to vote topped the list. Fully 76% say that to them this is a major reason to become a citizen. A Jordanian man in Northern Virginia remarked, "The way I look at it is I wanted to become a citizen to vote, because I wanted to make a difference. It's as simple as that."

Immigrants give several major reasons to pursue citizenship that primarily involve practical benefits, so it may be worthwhile to quickly mention one powerful—and distinctly sentimental—reason. For most immigrants, taking the step to become a citizen is tantamount to making a public pledge to join the nation: Almost 2 in 3 (65%) say a major reason to become a citizen is "to show a commitment and pride in being an American." "I became a citizen because this is my country; I have no other," remarked a man in Los Angeles. "I'm going to live here. My kids are going to live here. With all of us, we can make it a great country."

> **"I became a citizen because this is my country; I have no other...I'm going to live here. My kids are going to live here."**
>
> —Man from El Salvador

Benefits of Citizenship

Perhaps the post-September 11 era has increased a sense of vulnerability and insecurity, as 7 in 10 immigrants (70%) say that a major reason to become a citizen is "to have better legal rights and protections in the U.S." An Egyptian man who thought he had been treated unfairly by a police officer when a minor fender-bender turned into a serious altercation said, "To me, justice is if a cop will do something like this, he gets punished for it, because I didn't do nothing to him. I stopped, I say, 'I'm sorry.' If I'm American citizen, and I speak the language like everybody else, they would never do that."

Nearly 6 in 10 (58%) also simply say "so you would not have to worry about your immigration status" as being a major reason for becoming a citizen. An immigrant in Virginia told us: "The reason that I wanted to be a citizen, I think it's security. With a green card, what do they call it, a legal alien? And even the name sucks, you know? You're an alien, but you're legally here. So you don't feel that you really quite belong. Being a citizen makes you more so." A little more than a third (36%) say a major reason to become a citizen was "to make it easier to bring other family members" to the U.S.

The Reasons Why

Is the following a major reason, a minor reason, or not a reason at all to becoming a citizen?

% OF IMMIGRANTS WHO SAY:	MAJOR REASON	MINOR REASON	NOT A REASON AT ALL
To get the right to vote	76%	15%	8%
To have better legal rights and protections in the U.S.	70%	16%	12%
To show a commitment and pride in being an American	65%	21%	10%
I would not have to worry about immigration status	58%	20%	19%
To make it easier to get certain jobs	55%	22%	22%
To make it easier to travel in and out of the U.S.	51%	26%	21%
To make it easier to bring other family members to this country	36%	24%	38%
To qualify for government programs like Medicaid or food stamps	22%	20%	54%

Easier to Get Jobs

One of the most tangible benefits of citizenship is the doors it opens in the workplace, and 55% of immigrants say that a major reason to become a citizen is "to make it easier to get certain jobs." Although some in the focus groups talked about the wide availability of low-level jobs, many also talked about wanting to advance. Some also discussed civil service jobs, which are viewed as having better benefits and protections. "I want a better job," one woman said. "I work for the government. At my agency, they hire non-citizens, but if I want to go to another agency, I have to be a citizen." Similarly, a woman in Los Angeles commented, "I think a benefit to become an American citizen is to get a better job. If you want to get a job with the city or the government or the state you have to be a citizen. I think that's a good opportunity that you have."

Contrast this desire to expand work opportunities through citizenship with the fact that at the bottom of the list of reasons for gaining citizenship is to get public assistance. Few immigrants (22%) say that qualifying "for government programs like Medicaid or food stamps" is a major reason for becoming a citizen.

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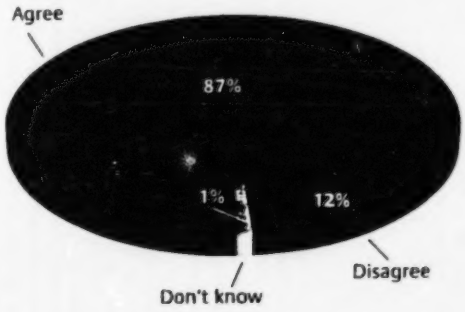
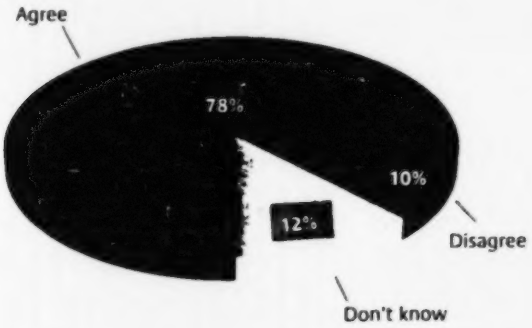
Little Love for Politicians

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Most politicians are pretty much willing to say whatever it takes in order to get themselves elected.

General Public*



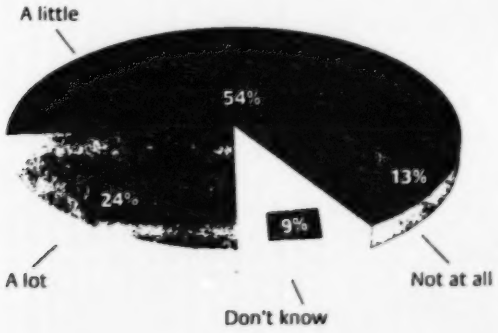
Immigrants



*Source: Shorenstein Center at Harvard University John F. Kennedy School of Government, March 1-March 5, 2000.

How much do you think America's elected officials care about the issues facing immigrants?

Immigrants



"[They] Say Whatever It Takes"

Earlier we saw that most immigrants admire the U.S. for its commitment to individual rights and freedoms and its dedication to the rule of law. But their view of politics and politicians in particular is characterized by an all too familiar skepticism, another—perhaps less captivating—indication that they have indeed absorbed mainstream American attitudes.

Almost 8 in 10 immigrants (78%) agree that "most politicians are pretty much willing to say whatever it takes in order to get themselves elected," with 55% strongly agreeing. A recent survey found that among the general public the number is even higher: 87% agree.[30] It would be difficult to distinguish the following immigrant voices from those of native-born Americans. An Asian woman in Los Angeles said, "They do care when it comes to the vote. They come around, they pay attention at that time when the season comes, but after that you never see them again." An immigrant in New York City said, "They make promises and everything just to get in there, and it's all for themselves once they're there. They make all the promises to make it work for them."

More directly connected to their interests, only 24% of immigrants say elected officials care a lot about the issues facing immigrants; 54% say they care a little and 13% not at all. As for the appeal of partisan politics, when asked which political party cares more about immigrants and the issues they face, Democrats are picked over Republicans by a 31% to 8% margin, although the plurality (37%) say both are about the same and 20% don't know. This immigrant failed to see a difference: "Nobody is sticking their neck out. I keep on getting these flyers at my house. Everybody's got the same things. You could just take the name off and you wouldn't know who was running for what. It's just all the same."

As American as Americans Get

The origins and backgrounds of immigrants to America change as the world's troubles and calamities—natural, economic or military—swerve and swirl from one region to another. Nor are U.S. policies neutral in their effect on who seeks and gains entry. But is there reason for the nation to worry that its essential character is undergoing a fundamental transformation? A core worry is what *Washington Post* columnist Robert J. Samuelson wrote about: "As a society, America's central interest lies in assimilating these [immigrant] families. This means more than having them join the economic mainstream. It also means that they think of themselves primarily as Americans. If the United States simply becomes a collection of self-designated 'minorities,' then the country will have changed for the worse."[31]

Samuelson goes on to acknowledge indications that the process of assimilation—especially key with Latinos—is working as it always has. This study corroborates this

is true. Whether they are Latin American, East Asian, Caribbean or European, immigrants appear to learn the basics of life in America and learn them quickly. The values and sentiments are simple: work and pay your taxes because no one is going to give you anything for free; try to speak the language, and you'll have a much easier time; love the country—because it's both special and much better than the one you left. A pragmatic orientation and acceptance of diversity prevail.

Americans simultaneously say they love their nation and blame each other for taking it for granted. Here immigrants are a little different: they appear to simultaneously love their newly adopted nation—and remember to appreciate it.

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FINDING SEVEN:
A Closer Look at Immigrants from Mexico

Mexican immigrants are significantly different from other immigrants in several areas. They are more likely to have come to the U.S. with less education, at a younger age and without the ability to speak or understand English. Once here, they are more likely to be low-income workers and lack health care. Even so, Mexican immigrants are more likely than other immigrants to say they believe the U.S. does better than their birth country in areas such as women's rights, health care, education and many others. Compared to other immigrants, Mexican immigrants are more likely to say they came to the U.S. specifically for job opportunities, and they are more divided about bilingual education. Fewer Mexican immigrants report that they are citizens, although most say they plan to do so in the future.

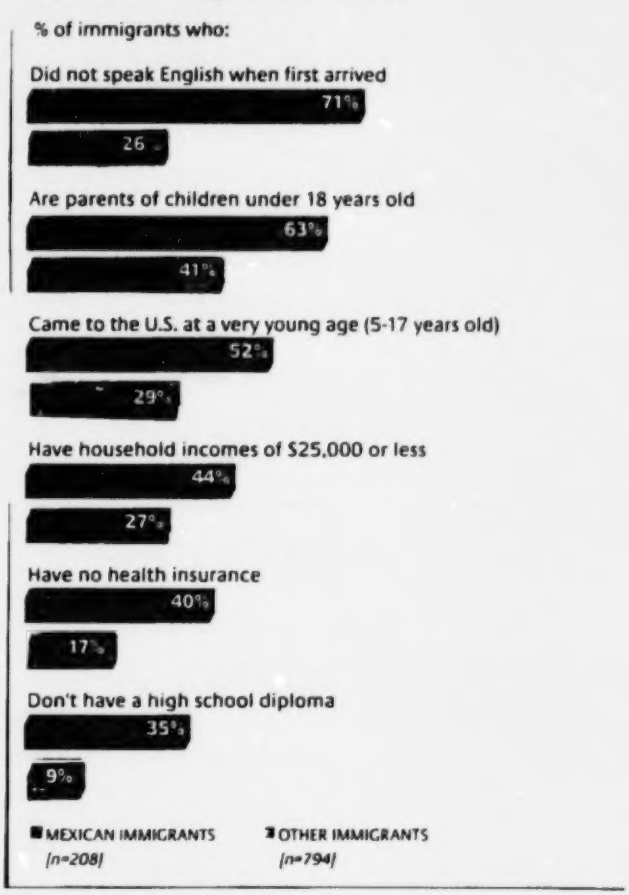
Mexican immigrants warrant a special look. One reason is simple demographics: Hispanics now comprise 12% of America's population, and this fast-growing segment is predominantly Mexican (66%) in origin.[32] In fact, Mexicans accounted for more than one-fourth of the foreign-born population in 2000.[33] Nor have demographic and economic realities escaped the notice of the nation's leadership. Under the Clinton administration, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and loan guarantees significantly helped a shaken Mexican economy. Under the current Bush administration, the Mexican-American relationship has been a centerpiece of foreign policy from the outset.

It also turns out that the views of Mexican immigrants often diverge from those of other immigrants. These differences, it should be quickly pointed out, are almost invariably in degree, not kind. Moreover, it is crucial to remember that many of these attitudinal differences may be driven by demographic differences that have nothing to do with national origins.

Who Are These Guys?

Mexican immigrants in this survey tend to come from tougher socioeconomic backgrounds. They are far more likely than other immigrants to have ended school without a high school degree (35% vs. 9%). Most came to this country at a very young age: 52% when they were 5 to 17 years old, compared with 29% of other immigrants. Most (71%) came to the country not speaking any English. More than 6 in 10 (63%) are currently parents of children under 18 years old, compared to 41% of other immigrants. They are more likely to be low income, that is have household incomes of $25,000 or less (44% vs. 27% of other immigrants). They are also far more likely to have no health insurance (40% vs. 17%).[34]

Mexican Immigrants: A Profile



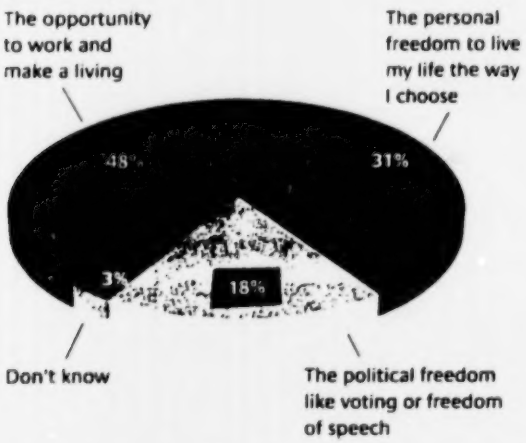
What's So Good about the U.S.?

As so many differences are reported here, it is essential to remember that in many important ways the views of Mexican

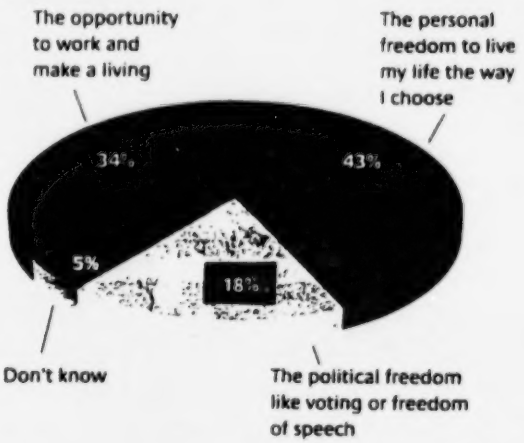
Here to Work

Thinking about living in the U.S., which is most important to you personally:

Mexican Immigrants


The opportunity to work and make a living
The personal freedom to live my life the way I choose
48%
31%
3%
18%
Don't know
The political freedom like voting or freedom of speech

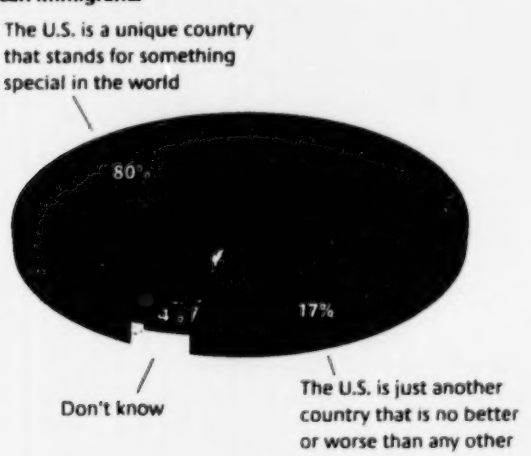
Other Immigrants


The opportunity to work and make a living
The personal freedom to live my life the way I choose
34%
43%
5%
18%
Don't know
The political freedom like voting or freedom of speech

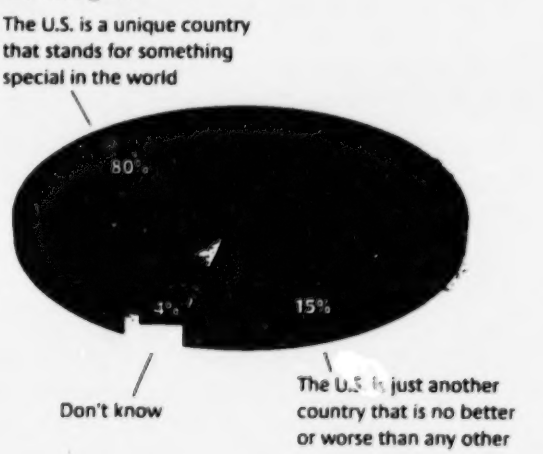
But the U.S. Is Special

Which of these two statements comes closer to your own view?

Mexican Immigrants


The U.S. is a unique country that stands for something special in the world
80%
17%
Don't know
The U.S. is just another country that is no better or worse than any other

Other Immigrants


The U.S. is a unique country that stands for something special in the world
80%
15%
Don't know
The U.S. is just another country that is no better or worse than any other

immigrants closely track the views of all other immigrants. For example, by an 80% to 17% margin, Mexican immigrants believe "the U.S. is a unique country that stands for something special in the world," not "just another country that is no better or worse than any other." That margin is nearly identical to the 80% to 15% found in the rest of the sample. Slightly more than 6 in 10 (62%) say they are "extremely happy" with life in the U.S.; among the rest of the sample, it's 54%. "I'm really blessed," said one Mexican immigrant. "The country has given me more than I expected. The kids don't want to go to where I'm from. They like it over there only to visit for vacation."

But the differences are often interesting. Mexican immigrants are consistently more convinced than other immigrants about the relative advantages the U.S. has to offer. For example, they are more likely than other immigrants to say the U.S. is better than their country of birth when it comes to women's rights (85% of Mexicans vs. 63% of other immigrants). The same is true for having "a legal system you can trust" (81% vs. 63%) and having an honest government (75% vs. 58%). Mexican immigrants are also substantially more impressed with the U.S. when it comes to having good health care (82% vs. 63%), a better education system (70% vs. 58%) and being a good place to raise children (64% vs. 45%).

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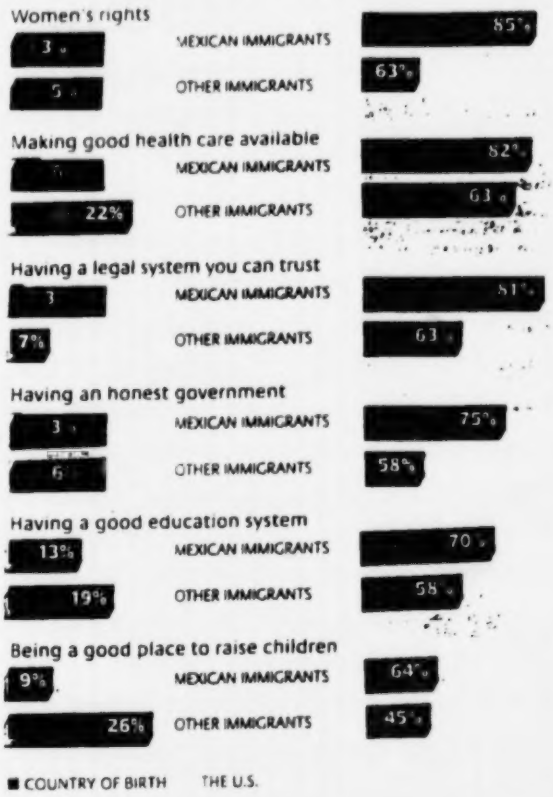
An Even Better Comparison

% of immigrants who say whether their native country or the U.S. is better when it comes to the following:



"We appreciate it more," said one woman from Mexico, "because we know how we suffered. We know. Sometimes we don't have nothing to eat over there." The sharpened sense of praise among Mexican immigrants most likely reflects the difficult circumstances of their native land: poverty and high unemployment, meager human services and endemic corruption and crime. Viewed in this light, it is not surprising that Mexican immigrants are even more likely than other immigrants to *strongly* agree with this statement: "I can trust the police to protect me and my family" (70% to 57%).

"Straight to Work"

Work is as crucial to Mexican immigrants as it is to other immigrants—if not more so. Asked to choose among three reasons for coming to the U.S., Mexican immigrants are more likely to be drawn by the opportunity to work and make a living (48% compared to 34% of other immigrants) rather than personal or political freedoms. "When I came here I went straight to work," said one Mexican immigrant. "I'm a contractor right now, but I was standing on the corners to find work when I first came." Other immigrants, by contrast, are more likely to point to personal freedoms: 43% compared to 31% of Mexican immigrants. Eighteen percent of both groups point to political freedoms as the most important attraction.

Like other groups, Mexican immigrants tend to frown upon public assistance: 68% say it's "extremely important" for immigrants "to work and stay off welfare." Mexican immigrants (53%) are about as likely to be working full time as East Asians (51%) or Caribbean (48%) immigrants. European immigrants tend to be older, perhaps explaining why far fewer (40%) work full-time.

Attitudes Toward Immigration

Some pundits grumble about how easy it is for Mexican immigrants in particular to cross the border, especially in Texas, Arizona and California. But Mexican immigrants are more likely than immigrants from other countries to reject the statement that "it's easy for immigrants to come to the U.S. illegally and live here without getting caught" (58% vs. 45%). And it's interesting to note that a plurality of Mexican immigrants (41%), like other immigrants (45%), think the U.S. strikes the right balance between being too open and too closed to immigration. Mexicans are more likely to say that the U.S. is too closed—22% vs. 11% of other immigrants—although one might have expected this number to be higher.

Most Mexican immigrants have a favorable opinion of the INS (65% vs. 55% of other immigrants). But at the same time, a majority does believe the government is now giving even *legal* immigrants a harder time: 66% compared to 42% of other immigrants. Mexican immigrants are also more likely to say that after September 11, the police or law enforcement officials have been watching them more closely or picking on them just because they are immigrants (18% vs. 6%). Mexican immigrants are more likely to say that there is at least some discrimination against immigrants in the U.S. (69% vs. 59% of other immigrants). Still, only 10% say they have personally experienced a great deal of discrimination because they were immigrants—virtually the same as the rest of the sample (7%).

English Or Inglés?

Mexican immigrants believe it is important to learn English, but as a group, they appear to be less convinced of this than other immigrants. This weaker conviction is also reflected in their views on public schools teaching in languages other than English.

When it comes to having a grounding in English, most Mexican immigrants start at the very beginning. Fully 71% did not speak it at all when they first arrived, compared to 26% of other groups. More broadly, Mexican immigrants have a more difficult starting point when it comes to education. They are

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almost four times as likely as other immigrants to have stopped their schooling before getting a high school degree (35% to 9%). But Mexican immigrants know the cost of poor language skills. They are as likely as other immigrants (85%) to say it's hard for "new immigrants to get a good job or do well in this country without learning English." As one Mexican immigrant interviewed said, "When I came it was very hard because I didn't speak any English and I had to raise the kids… I didn't know anything. I had to adapt to another language, another culture—everything."

Nor do Mexican immigrants appear to be catching up at the same rate as other immigrants. Of those who knew little or no English at arrival, half (50%) still describe their English skills as fair or poor at the time of the survey. Among other immigrants the number is 34%.

On the whole, the sense of urgency over acquiring English is less pronounced among Mexican immigrants—although it's clearly there. Some of this may be due to vastly different starting points: far fewer come to the U.S. speaking English and far fewer have high levels of education. It also appears that for Mexican immigrants there are a lot more opportunities to speak Spanish and less pressure to speak English. Almost 6 in 10 (59%) of Mexican immigrants say that a lot of the people they spend time with are from their home country—compared to only 31% of other immigrants. Half of Mexicans (50%)—compared to 34% of other immigrants—mostly speak their native language at home.

Closer to Home

% OF IMMIGRANTS WHO:	MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS	OTHER IMMIGRANTS
Say a lot of the people they know and spend time with are from their home country	59%	31%
Mostly speak their native language at home	50%	34%
Are citizens	45%	59%
Took a longer time to become citizens (10 or more years)	68%	41%
Say "I have become an American"	30%	45%

While Mexican immigrants think learning English is important, they are less likely to feel this than other immigrants. For example, by a slim 54% to 43% majority, Mexicans say the U.S. should expect all immigrants who don't speak English to learn it, rather than to leave it up to individuals to decide. Among other immigrants the margin is a stronger 68% to 28%. And a bare 51% to 45% majority of Mexican immigrants thinks that all public school classes should be taught in English (rather than allowing some classes to be taught in a student's native language). Among other immigrants, the majority is again stronger with 67% to 29%.

Ironically, Mexican immigrants are almost twice as likely as other immigrants to say that the public schools do an excellent or good job teaching immigrant children to speak English quickly (61% vs. 33%). A number of reasons could account for this. It may be that since their own English skills often fall short, they are less likely to be critical of the progress of others in learning the language. It may be that whatever their children learn looms greater when they themselves have poor skills. Or perhaps it is simply that the schools in western states are doing a better job of teaching English than other regions of the country (66% of Mexicans in our sample are located in the western U.S., compared to only 42% of other immigrants).

On Citizenship

Mexican immigrants lag behind other groups both in terms of their self-perception of an American identity and in terms of actual citizenship. Fewer Mexican immigrants say "I have become an American"—30% versus 45% of other immigrants. It also appears that citizenship is less common among Mexicans (45% vs. 59%). And those Mexican immigrants who decide to become citizens take a longer time to do so: 68% who are citizens took 10 or more years to naturalize, compared to just 41% of other immigrants.

Nevertheless, citizenship is clearly their stated goal. More than 6 in 10 (62%) Mexicans who are not citizens plan to become so in the future (among other immigrants the number drops to 50%). What's more, a larger majority of Mexican immigrants believe that becoming a citizen is extremely important (79% vs. 65%).

"I want to become a citizen," said one Mexican immigrant living in Los Angeles, and proceeded to list some practical reasons for doing so. "That will help me get a better job…If you become a citizen, you can go from one place to another place and they don't ask you a lot of questions, giving you a lot of papers to fill out. If you go to the hospital and you're not a citizen they don't give you medication."

As it is for most other immigrants, American citizenship is attractive to Mexicans for practical reasons. They are even more likely to say a major reason for becoming a citizen is so "you would not have to worry about your immigration status" (67% vs. 56% of other immigrants); "to make it easier to get certain jobs" (71% vs. 51%); "to make it easier to travel in and out of the U.S." (61% vs. 49%); and "to have better legal rights and protections in the U.S." (80% vs. 68%).

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Afterword by Deborah Wadsworth

The research that has culminated in *Now That I'm Here* was initially conceived at a time when Americans' attitudes toward immigration had yet to be refracted through the lens of terrorism. Even then, however, there were signs of public frustration over the nation's policies toward illegal immigration and sporadic legislative initiatives sometimes leading to acrimonious debates over solutions. We were prepared to wade into this thicket to listen carefully to what immigrants themselves had to say about life in America. We hoped to explore not only why people migrate here but also whether their fantasies once here were borne out by their actual experiences.

The attacks of September 11 caused us to pause in our work. We wondered, along with many others, how the events of that day would affect Americans' attitudes about our place in the world and about those living in the United States who were not born in this country. And, we conjectured, if Americans' views toward immigrants had changed, might that not affect immigrants' perceptions of life in the U.S. as well? Given all these uncertainties, we decided to step back and wait for some time to elapse before we began our interviews. We have, in fact, put significant distance between the origins of this study and our actual research.

As you have read, foreign-born residents here have experienced changes since September 11. Other research indicates some changes in the attitudes of the general public as well. The number of Americans who say they want immigration curtailed has grown. A bipartisan effort to ease the process of legalization for immigrants was abandoned this year; and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, in a recent report, has attributed an increase in complaints of discrimination to hostility toward Muslims and Middle Easterners as a backlash to September 11.[34]

Prevailing Assumptions

Based on our research, many immigrants would agree that some things have gotten tougher for them, but mercifully, few of those we interviewed present evidence of having been mistreated in the wake of the attacks. And most say that if they had the chance to do it all again, they would still choose to come to America. Their views are interesting, we think, not only for what they say it means to be an immigrant in America at this moment, but also for the light they shed on some of the controversies surrounding the issue of immigration. In more than one instance, our findings challenge prevailing assumptions.

For example, some advocates have sounded alarm bells over the possibility of immigrants being victimized in the nation's attempt to guard against further terrorist threats. The National Immigration Forum, among others, has raised concern that actions that have cast a wide net are hauling in "hundreds of innocent persons...creating an atmosphere of fear in immigrant communities."[35] While any mistreatment of foreign-born residents is a cause for deep concern and must be addressed, our study suggests that any such action, while serious, is not pervasive. A large majority of our respondents acknowledge they are aware of some discrimination in America, but when talking about their own lives and their own experiences, their description is upbeat and optimistic. To be sure, life is not hassle-free, but they do not feel they are targeted. In fact, more than half say the U.S. does a better job than their birth country in treating people of different backgrounds with respect and tolerance, and almost 9 in 10 agree that police in this country can be trusted to protect them and their families.

Is Abuse Common?

Now That I'm Here also provides some balance to the debate over the much-maligned and frequently denigrated Immigration and Naturalization Service. While even its leaders acknowledge serious problems—and, given recent legislation, substantial reform will probably follow—the reaction of immigrants deserves some note. For most who have dealt with the INS, it is, at worst, a bureaucratic nuisance demanding far too much paper and time. Participants in focus groups didn't hesitate to complain about the problems, but for most respondents in our survey, the INS is not the punitive or sinister agency sometimes depicted in headlines. Elisa Massimino, the Washington, D.C. director of the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, has pointed to "abusive language and even some physical abuse"

directed at many foreigners,[16] and to the degree that there is evidence of such abuse, it cannot be overlooked. But based on what we heard, this, too, is neither a pervasive nor a systemic problem.

There is, of course, still another outcry that comes from a different perspective. Those who are firmly convinced that most immigrants are here only to take advantage of the promise of handouts or the possibility of making a quick buck, in order to return home as soon as they've developed the wherewithal to do so, will find this study challenges their perceptions as well. It is true that many immigrants, particularly those who have arrived more recently, continue to feel a bond with the country of their birth, and some send money back to relatives less fortunate than they. But, for an overwhelming majority, their connection to the U.S. is neither tenuous nor solely economic.

"It's not a perfect society, but it's good. It's better than my own country. It's worth it."

—Latino Man

A Belief in Hard Work

Most are fundamentally committed to making America their permanent home, and large numbers say they hope to become citizens. Most think of America as a special place, where they will have the personal freedom to live life as they choose. They also say they know there are no free lunches here; that hard work is the only way to sustain themselves. Almost three-quarters say it is extremely important for immigrants to work and stay off welfare. And, more than 6 in 10 say it is important for all immigrants to learn English.

In focus groups, we were often struck by the degree to which immigrants seem to have imbibed so much of what we have come to think of as the American mindset. Again and again, they made clear just how deeply they have internalized America's celebrated work ethic. And, just like many native-born Americans, they are quick to criticize our politics and our politicians. Immigrants are convinced politicians pander to constituents, willing to say whatever it takes to get elected. Very few of them believe elected officials here really care about the issues facing immigrants.

American history is filled with evidence of ambivalence toward immigration and immigrants and, as a consequence, with controversy as successive waves of people have migrated here. But we may have entered a particularly difficult phase. Philip Shenon sounds the alarm in his recent piece in *The New York Times*, "For Immigrants, the Watchword Suddenly Is Enforcement." He writes, "Advocates on both sides of the immigration debate say they are still trying to make sense of the massive homeland security legislation," and they agree, he continues, to "worry that immigrant rights and services are at risk."[17] We will have difficult decisions to make, going forward in a context we have never faced before. The road map has yet to be drawn that will illuminate how America can both continue to welcome newcomers and make them feel at home while being vigilant and careful in a complex and threatening world.

Clear-Eyed Patriotism

The voices of those who have chosen to make a home here are important to consider. As the nation intensifies its focus on immigration policy out of concern about national security and terrorism, we must not lose sight of the energy and enthusiasm the nation's immigrants have traditionally brought.

Now That I'm Here offers reassuring evidence of the benefits of the path we have chosen thus far. Large numbers of the nation's immigrants see America as a very good place to be and are willing to work hard at being productive and contributing members of society. Moreover, they have adopted the clear-eyed form of patriotism we see so often in those born here.

As one of the immigrants interviewed for this study put it, "It's not a perfect society, but it's good. It's better," he said, "than my own country. It's worth it."

President
Public Agenda

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Endnotes

1. Farkas, Steve, Jean Johnson, et al. *Knowing It by Heart: Americans Consider the Constitution and its Meaning*, Public Agenda, 2002. "Compared to other Americans, do you think that immigrants have more appreciation for the Constitution and its rights and freedoms (57%), less appreciation (23%), or is there no difference (13%)?" Don't Know (7%).

2. See, for example, *Gallup Poll*. National telephone survey of 1,008 adults, conducted September 11-13, 2000. "Which comes closer to your point of view—immigrants in the long run become productive citizens and pay their fair share of taxes (48%) or immigrants cost the taxpayers too much by using government services like public education and medical services (40%)?" No opinion (12%).

3. See, for example, Center for Immigration Studies. National telephone survey of 1,018 adult likely voters, conducted September 15-16, 2001. "Do you think the government is doing enough (18%) or not enough (77%) to control the border and to screen people allowed into the country?" Don't Know (5%).

4. *CBS News/New York Times Poll*. National telephone survey of 1,052 adults, conducted December 7-10, 2001. "Do you think most of the people who have moved to the United States in the last few years are here legally (29%), or are most of them here illegally (53%)?" Half & half (vol.)(3%); Don't Know/No Answer (15%).

5. Center for Immigration Studies. "Eight Million Illegal Aliens in 2000: Census Bureau Finding Raises Concern Over Border Control in Light of Terrorist Threat," October 24, 2001.

6. *Gallup Poll*. National telephone survey of 1,008 adults, conducted September 11-13, 2000.

7. *Gallup/CNN/USA Today Poll*. National telephone survey of 1,006 adults, conducted October 19-21, 2001.

8. *Gallup/CNN/USA Today Poll*. National telephone survey of 1,003 adults, conducted September 2-4, 2002."In your view, should immigration be kept at its present level (26%), increased (17%) or decreased (54%)?" No opinion (3%).

9. Sachs, Susan. "Threats and Responses: Security; Government Ready to Fingerprint and Keep Track of Some Foreign Visitors." The New York Times, September 9, 2002.

10. Sachs, Susan. "Immigrants Facing Strict New Controls On Cash Sent Home." The New York Times, November 12, 2002.

11. *The Foreign Born Population in the United States*, March 2000. U.S. Census Bureau, January 2001.

12. While there are no official population figures for religious affiliation in the U.S., experts estimate that there are approximately six million American Muslims. U.S. Department of State's Office of International Information Programs. *Fact Sheet: Islam in the United States.* http://usinfo.state.gov/usa/islam/fact2.htm The total U.S. population is 281,421,906. U.S. Census Bureau, 2000.

13. Farkas, Steve, Jean Johnson, et al. *Knowing It by Heart: Americans Consider the Constitution and its Meaning*, Public Agenda, 2002. "Do you think that most Americans appreciate the freedoms we have (18%) or do most Americans take them for granted (81%)?" Don't know (1%).

14. Farkas, Steve, Jean Johnson, et al. *Knowing It by Heart: Americans Consider the Constitution and its Meaning*, Public Agenda, 2002. "Compared to other Americans, do you think that immigrants have more appreciation for the Constitution and its rights and freedoms (57%), less appreciation (23%), or is there no difference (13%)?" Don't Know (7%).

15. Farkas, Steve, Jean Johnson, et al. *Aggravating Circumstances: A Status Report on Rudeness in America*, Public Agenda, 2002. "Do you think that Americans used to treat each other with more respect and courtesy in the past (73%), or is this just nostalgia for a past that never existed (21%)?" Don't know (6%). "And have you yourself ever been rude and disrespectful?" Yes (41%); No (59%); Don't know (1%).

16. *Taking America's Pulse II Survey*. National telephone survey of 2,584 adults, conducted January 20-March 19, 2000. "Would you say there is a great deal of discrimination (26%), some discrimination (50%), only a little discrimination (13%), or none at all against immigrants (5%)?" Don't know/Refused (7%).

17. See, for example, Arab American Institute Foundation. "Profiling and Pride: Arab American Attitudes and Behavior Since September 11," July 2002.

18. In March 2000, six states had estimated foreign born populations of 1 million or more; California (8.8 million), New York (3.6 million), Florida (2.8 million), Texas (2.4 million), New Jersey (1.2 million), and Illinois (1.2 million). These states accounted for 70.4% of the total foreign-born population. *Profile of the Foreign-Born Population in the United States: 2000*. U.S. Census Bureau, December 2001. And according to Scan/US 2000 Census Data, the 232 counties out of the 3,109 total counties in the nation targeted in this study, cover 81% of the foreign born households in the country.

19. See, for example, Arab American Institute Foundation. "Profiling and Pride: Arab American Attitudes and Behavior Since September 11," July 2002.

20. *NBC News/Wall Street Journal Poll*. National telephone survey of 1,213 adults, conducted March 2-5, 2000.

21. *The Bulletin's Frontrunner*. "Ziglar Blames 'Bureaucratic Process' For INS Visa Mistake," March 18, 2002.

22. *Washington Post/Kaiser/Harvard University Latinos Survey*. National telephone survey of 4,614 adults, conducted June 30-August 30, 1999. "Please tell me if you have a favorable (42%) or unfavorable opinion (37%) of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, or the INS?" Don't know (21%).

23. Immigration and Naturalization Service. Inspections. http://www.ins.gov/graphics/aboutins/statistics/msrsep01/INSP.HTM

24. *Community Consensus Survey* by the Democratic Leadership Council. National telephone study of 509 adults, conducted February 12-14, 1999. "Do you feel that being able to speak and understand English is a very important obligation (85%), a somewhat important obligation (12%), or not an obligation (3%) that a citizen owes to the country?" Don't know (1%).

25. *Washington Post/Kaiser/Harvard University Follow-up Latinos Study*. National telephone survey of 1,016 adults, conducted August 20-25, 1999.

26. Farkas, Steve, Jean Johnson, et al. *A Lot To Be Thankful For: What Parents Want Children To Learn About America*, Public Agenda 1998.

27. Farkas, Steve, Jean Johnson, et al. *The Values We Live By: What Americans Want From Welfare Reform*, Public Agenda 1996.

28. Farkas, Steve, Jean Johnson, et al. *A Lot To Be Thankful For: What Parents Want Children To Learn About America*, Public Agenda 1998.

29. *Profile of the Foreign-Born Population in the United States: 2000*. U.S. Census Bureau, December 2001.

30. *Shorenstein Center Poll*. National telephone survey of 1,011 adults, conducted March 1-5, 2000. "Most politicians are pretty much willing to say whatever it takes in order to get themselves elected. Do you strongly agree (57%), somewhat agree (30%), somewhat disagree (8%), or strongly disagree (4%)?" Don't know (1%).

31. Samuelson, Robert J. "Can America Assimilate?" *The Washington Post*, April 6, 2001.

32. *The Hispanic Population in the United States*. U.S. Census Bureau, March 2000.

33. *Profile of the Foreign-Born Population in the United States: 2000*. U.S. Census Bureau, December 2001.

34. McDonough, Siobhan. "EEOC Says Charges of National Origin Discrimination Increasing." *The Associated Press*, December 4, 2002.

35. National Immigration Forum, Backgrounder. "Immigrants in the Crosshairs: The Quiet Backlash Against America's Immigrants and Refugees," September 10, 2002.

36. Sachs, Susan. "Threats and Responses: Security; Government Ready to Fingerprint and Keep Track of Some Foreign Visitors." *The New York Times*, September 9, 2002.

37. Shenon, Philip. "For Immigrants, the Watchword Suddenly Is Enforcement." *The New York Times*, December 8, 2002.

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Methodology

Now That I'm Here is based on a national telephone survey of 1,002 foreign-born adults aged 18 or older who came to live in the U.S. when they were at least 5 years old. The margin of error is plus or minus three percentage points. The survey was preceded by seven focus groups conducted in sites across the country as well as 13 in-depth interviews with immigration experts in academia, public policy, law and community outreach.

The Telephone Survey

Telephone interviews were conducted between October 24 and November 18, 2002, with 1,002 foreign-born adults aged 18 or older who came to live in the U.S. when they were at least 5 years old. The interviews averaged 28 minutes in length.

Throughout the survey, special efforts were undertaken to make the interview process comfortable for limited English-speaking respondents and to assure all respondents of the confidentiality and anonymity of their answers. Interviewers were instructed to read questions slowly, to offer to repeat questions and to give respondents as much time as needed to respond. Interviewers made more callbacks to reach prospective respondents than is typical during the fielding of this survey. Prior to fielding, the survey was extensively pre-tested with immigrants to ensure that all questions were easily understood.

The survey instrument was translated into Spanish, and households identified as Spanish-speaking were re-contacted by bilingual interviewers. These interviewers read from a translated paper version of the questionnaire and encoded responses into the CATI programmed English version. A total of 77 interviews were conducted in Spanish.

The margin of error for the sample of 1,002 adults is plus or minus three percentage points; the margin of error is higher when comparing percentages across subgroups.

The Sample

The sample for this study was drawn as follows:

- 830 respondents were randomly selected from a targeted sample of 232 counties, representing 81% of foreign-born households in the U.S., using a standard, random-digit-dialing technology whereby every household in the sample had an equal chance of being contacted, including those with unlisted numbers.
- 172 respondents were selected from a pre-screened sample of adults determined to be foreign-born through random sample telephone surveys previously conducted by Public Agenda. The known foreign-born households were re-contacted, and potential respondents were invited to participate in the study.

The Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed by Public Agenda, and all interpretation of the data reflected in this report was done by Public Agenda. As in all surveys, question order effects and other non-sampling sources of error can sometimes affect results. Steps were taken to minimize these, including extensively pre-testing the survey instrument and randomizing the order in which some questions and answer categories were read.

The survey was fielded by Robinson and Muenster Associates, Inc. of Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Sample was provided by Survey Sampling, Inc.

The Focus Groups

Focus groups allow for an in-depth, qualitative exploration of the dynamics underlying the public's attitudes toward complex issues. Insights from these groups were important to the survey design, and quotes were drawn from them to give voice to attitudes captured statistically through the survey interviews.

A total of seven focus groups were conducted with foreign-born residents aged 18 or older in July and August 2002 in the following cities: New York, NY; Los Angeles, CA; Miami, FL; Sioux Falls, SD; and Alexandria, VA.

The Experts

Prior to conducting the focus groups and the telephone survey, Public Agenda interviewed 13 immigration experts to obtain grounding in the current substantive issues concerning immigrants in the U.S. The experts interviewed are as follows:

- Matthew Baez, Individual Assistant Coordinator for the Hispanic Ministry, Chattanooga, TN
- Maurice Belanger, Senior Policy Associate, The National Immigration Forum, Washington, D.C.
- Rodolfo O. de la Garza, Professor of Political Science, Columbia University, and Vice President of the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute at Columbia University
- Felipe Gorostiza, Principal, Urbis

- Eileen Diaz McConnell, Ph.D., Latino Studies Program, Indiana University
- Allen E. Kaye, former President of the American Immigration Lawyers Association
- Mark Krikorian, Executive Director, Center for Immigration Studies, Washington, D.C.
- Michele Lord, Principal, Lord Ross
- Clarissa Martinez De Castro, Director of State and Local Public Policy, The National Council of La Raza, Washington, D.C.
- Margie McHugh, Executive Director, New York Immigration Coalition
- Ira Mehlman, Media Director for FAIR (Federation for American Immigration Reform)
- Myra Oliver, Executive Director, International Institute of Connecticut, Inc.
- Dianne Schmidley, U.S. Census Bureau

Characteristics of the Foreign Born Population

	U.S. Census 2000	Sample (n=1,002)
Place of Birth	%	%
Central America	35	28
Asia	26	28
Europe	15	16
Caribbean	10	10
South America	7	9
Other Regions	8	8
Gender		
Male	50	49
Female	50	51
Urbanicity		
Urban	45	52
Suburban	50	46
Rural	5	3
Region		
West	40	47
South	27	24
Northeast	23	25
Midwest	11	4
Year of Arrival		
1990s or later	40	36
1980s	28	26
1970s	16	18
Pre-1970	16	18
Length of Residence		
Less than 5 years	22	13
5-9 years	18	14
10-19 years	28	28
20 or more years	32	43
Race and Ethnicity*		
White	25	26
Black	8	9
Hispanic	45	36
Asian/Pacific Islander	24	23

A comparison of the demographic characteristics of immigrants as reported by the U.S. Census to the demographic characteristics of our sample of immigrants reveals that our sample has lower percentages of immigrants from Central America and of immigrants living in the U.S. less than five years. This may be because: 1) we interviewed only immigrants who came to the U.S. to live when they were at least 5 years old, whereas the U.S. Census data reports all immigrants, regardless of age of arrival; 2) the Census counts all individuals living in all households whereas we sampled only one adult per household, even if more than one family were living in the house and sharing the same phone number; 3) our interviewing was conducted by telephone so there was a greater chance that immigrants who are transient, very recently arrived or simply without phones were missed; 4) our sample is randomly drawn from counties where 81% of all U.S. immigrants reside.

*The U.S. Census Bureau asked one question to determine Hispanic origin and another question to determine race. Public Agenda asked only one question to determine race and ethnicity. Therefore, the data for race are not comparable.

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Region by Country of Birth

[Note: Data for each country below represent the actual number of respondents in the sample.]

Central America = 28% of the sample [n= 283]	
Belize	3
Costa Rica	7
El Salvador	29
Guatemala	16
Honduras	10
Mexico	208
Nicaragua	5
Panama	5

Asia = 28% of the sample [n=283]	
Afghanistan	5
Armenia	4
Bangladesh	10
Burma	1
Cambodia	3
China	29
Hong Kong	6
India	49
Indonesia	3
Iran	15
Iraq	3
Israel	10
Japan	15
Jordan	3
Kazakhstan	1
Korea	19
Laos	4
Lebanon	1
Malaysia	2
Nepal	1
Pakistan	5
Philippines	45
Saudi Arabia	1
Singapore	2
Sri Lanka	1
Syria	2
Taiwan	11
Thailand	6
Turkey	3
Kuwait	1
Vietnam	22

Europe = 16% of the sample [n=159]	
Albania	2
Austria	5
Belgium	2
Belarus	1
Bulgaria	2
Croatia	1
Czechoslovakia	3
Denmark	1
England	16
Estonia	2
Finland	2
France	9
Germany	24
Greece	3
Hungary	2
Ireland	4
Italy	10
Lithuania	1
Netherlands	6
Norway	4
Poland	11
Portugal	2
Romania	6
Russia	13
Scotland	3
Slovenia	1
Spain	2
Sweden	2
Ukraine	6
United Kingdom	5
Yugoslavia	7
Other (country not specified)	1

Caribbean = 10% of the sample [n=103]	
Antigua	3
Barbados	3
Cuba	18
Dominica	3
Dominican Republic	20
Haiti	9
Jamaica	26
Netherland Antilles	1
St. Lucia	2
St. Vincent	1
Trinidad & Tobago	14
West Indies	2
Other (country not specified)	1

South America = 9% of the sample [n=90]	
Argentina	9
Bolivia	3
Brazil	9
Chile	1
Colombia	20
Ecuador	16
Guyana	17
Paraguay	1
Peru	8
Uruguay	2
Venezuela	4

Other Regions = 8% of the sample [n=84]	
Africa	2
Algeria	1
Australia	7
Canada	40
Ethiopia	2
Egypt	9
Fiji Islands	1
Ghana	2
Kenya	2
Liberia	1
Morocco	3
Papua New Guinea	1
Nigeria	2
Senegal	1
South Africa	5
Sudan	1
Uganda	1
Zambia	1
Zimbabwe	2

Other Groups by Country of Birth

Non-Mexican Latino = 20% of the sample [n=203]	
Belize	3
Costa Rica	7
El Salvador	29
Guatemala	16
Honduras	10
Nicaragua	5
Panama	5
Cuba	18
Dominican Republic	20
Argentina	9
Bolivia	3
Brazil	9
Chile	1
Colombia	20
Ecuador	16
Guyana	17
Paraguay	1
Peru	8
Uruguay	2
Venezuela	4

East Asian = 17% of the sample [n=168]	
Burma	1
Cambodia	3
China	29
Hong Kong	6
Indonesia	3
Japan	15
Korea	19
Laos	4
Malaysia	2
Philippines	45
Singapore	2
Taiwan	11
Thailand	6
Vietnam	22

Middle East = 6% of the sample [n=58]	
Afghanistan	5
Iran	15
Iraq	3
Israel	10
Jordan	3
Lebanon	1
Saudi Arabia	1
Syria	2
Turkey	3
Kuwait	1
Algeria	1
Egypt	9
Morocco	3
Sudan	1

Complete Survey Results

Now That I'm Here: What America's Immigrants Have to Say about Life in the U.S. Today

This study is based on a nationally representative cross-section of 1,002 foreign-born adults aged 18 or older who came to the U.S. at age 5 or older.

Results of less than .5% are signified by an asterisk. Results of zero are signified by a dash. Responses may not always total 100% due to rounding. Combining answer categories may produce slight discrepancies between the numbers in these survey results and numbers in the report.

	TOTAL	MEXICAN	NON MEXICAN LATINO	EUROPEAN	EAST ASIAN	CARIBBEAN
	n=1,002	*n=208*	*n=203*	*n=159*	*n=168*	*n=103*
	%	%	%	%	%	%
QS1 Were you born in the United States, or in another country?						
Born in the United States (Terminated)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Puerto Rico, Guam or U.S. Virgin Islands (Terminated)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Born in another country	100	100	100	100	100	100
QS2 Are you 18 years old or older?						
Yes	100	100	100	100	100	100
No (Terminated)	-	-	-	-	-	-
QS3 How old were you when you came to the United States to live?						
4 years or less (Terminated)	-	-	-	-	-	-
5-17 years	34	52	37	30	26	36
18-29 years	44	37	43	42	49	36
30 or older	22	10	20	29	24	26
[VOL] Don't Know	1	1	-	-	1	2
QS4 As best you can remember, was it before you were 5 years old, or was it later than that? *Base: Respondent said don't know, not applicable or refused when asked age came to U.S. (QS3) [n=8]*						
Before 5 years old (Terminated)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Later than that	100	100	-	-	100	100
Q1 What country were you born in? *[Open ended question with pre-coded list. See table in Methodology for list of recorded countries. Countries are grouped according to the regions below.]*						
Central America	28	100	37	-	-	-
Asia	28	-	-	-	100	-
Europe	16	-	-	100	-	-
Caribbean	10	-	19	-	-	100
South America	9	-	44	-	-	-
Other	8	-	-	-	-	-

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	TOTAL	MEXICAN	NON MEXICAN LATINO	EUROPEAN	EAST ASIAN	CARIBBEAN
	n=1,002	*n=208*	*n=203*	*n=159*	*n=168*	*n=103*
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Q2 What year did you come to the United States to live?						
Before 1970	18	14	19	42	8	26
1970-1979	18	20	14	16	21	18
1980-1989	26	32	29	14	32	22
1990 or later	36	29	35	27	40	31
[VOL] Don't Know	2	5	3	2	-	3
Q3 Overall would you say that you are extremely happy, somewhat happy or generally disappointed with life in the U.S.?						
Extremely happy	55	62	62	65	45	47
Somewhat happy	41	37	35	32	53	49
Generally disappointed	2	1	3	1	1	4
[VOL] Don't Know	1	1	1	3	1	1
Q4 If you could do it again, would you choose: [ROTATE FIRST & SECOND]						
To come to the U.S.	80	86	82	79	78	76
To stay in the country where you were born	11	9	11	13	10	18
Would you pick a different country to live in?	4	3	5	3	4	6
[VOL] Don't Know	4	2	3	6	8	1
Q5 When you first came to this country, did you have a good amount of money to get you started or did you come with very little money in your pocket?						
A good amount of money	28	18	27	26	32	17
Very little money	69	77	70	72	64	80
[VOL] Don't Know	4	5	4	3	4	3
Q6 As things stand now, is it MOST likely: [ROTATE FIRST AND SECOND]						
That the U.S. will be your permanent home	74	80	77	84	72	67
That some day you will go back to live in the country where you were born	15	16	13	10	13	20
That you will move some place else to live	3	1	1	3	4	5
[VOL] Don't Know	8	4	9	4	11	9
Q7 Which of these statements comes closest to describing you?						
I live here, but I don't consider myself an American	14	19	12	7	10	13
I act like an American outside, but at home I keep my own culture and traditions	41	48	43	27	50	44
I have become an American	42	30	42	62	37	40
[VOL] Don't Know	4	3	3	4	3	3

	TOTAL	MEXICAN	NON MEXICAN LATINO	EUROPEAN	EAST ASIAN	CARIBBEAN
	n=1,002	*n=208*	*n=203*	*n=159*	*n=168*	*n=103*
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Q8 In your own words, what would you say was the biggest reason you came to the U.S. to live?						
[Open ended question]						
Better life/Future/U.S. is a great country/Freedoms	22	33	24	16	19	20
Work/Better opportunity/Money	20	24	19	19	18	19
Family/Family was here/Came as a child	18	22	19	18	22	19
School/Education	12	5	8	4	19	18
Marriage/Love	10	5	7	18	10	5
Politics/Escape/War/Refugee	8	1	12	12	9	12
Other	9	8	11	12	3	6
[VOL] Don't Know	1	2	-	1	1	1
Q9 Thinking about living in the U.S., which of these three things is MOST important to you personally: [ROTATE]						
The opportunity to work and make a living	37	48	42	27	32	37
The personal freedom to live your life the way you choose	40	31	36	49	41	32
The political freedoms like voting or freedom of speech	18	18	19	21	20	24
[VOL] Don't Know	4	3	3	3	6	7
Q10 Would you say there is a great deal of discrimination against immigrants in the U.S. today, some, only a little, or none at all?						
A great deal of discrimination	18	25	24	13	8	29
Some	43	44	40	35	53	47
Only a little	19	20	18	23	21	11
None at all	15	9	16	26	10	9
[VOL] Don't Know	5	2	3	3	9	5
Q11 And how much discrimination have you personally experienced simply because you are an immigrant—a great deal of discrimination, some, only a little, or none at all?						
A great deal of discrimination	7	10	7	4	6	15
Some	23	21	28	19	29	29
Only a little	26	25	29	21	36	21
None at all	41	43	36	54	24	33
[VOL] Don't Know	2	1	1	1	5	2
Q12 For you personally, do you think living in the U.S. is easy or hard? Is that very or somewhat?						
NET Very/Somewhat easy	61	56	54	67	62	52
Very easy	27	24	25	38	21	17
Somewhat easy	34	32	29	29	41	35
NET Somewhat/Very hard	36	42	44	28	35	44
Somewhat hard	27	31	33	23	24	32
Very hard	9	11	10	5	11	12
[VOL] Don't Know	3	2	3	5	4	4

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	TOTAL	MEXICAN	NON MEXICAN LATINO	EUROPEAN	EAST ASIAN	CARIBBEAN
	n=1,002	*n=208*	*n=203*	*n=159*	*n=168*	*n=103*
	%	%	%	%	%	%
[RANDOMIZE Q13-Q23]						
Now I'm going to ask you to compare the U.S. to the country where you were born on a list of things and ask which you think is better—the country where you were born, the U.S., or if they are about the same.						
Q13 When it comes to being a good place to raise children?						
The country where you were born	22	9	24	23	19	40
The U.S.	49	64	45	47	62	37
They're about the same	24	23	26	23	16	19
[VOL] Don't Know	5	4	5	6	4	4
Q14 When it comes to having more opportunity to earn a good living?						
The country where you were born	4	1	3	5	10	-
The U.S.	88	93	91	81	83	94
They're about the same	7	6	4	11	6	5
[VOL] Don't Know	2	1	3	3	2	1
Q15 When it comes to having a good education system?						
The country where you were born	18	13	16	34	11	18
The U.S.	60	70	62	38	73	65
They're about the same	18	15	18	22	14	14
[VOL] Don't Know	4	2	3	6	3	4
Q16 When it comes to having an honest government?						
The country where you were born	6	3	5	11	2	7
The U.S.	62	75	70	41	72	52
They're about the same	24	16	19	35	17	31
[VOL] Don't Know	9	6	6	13	9	10
Q17 When it comes to having a legal system you can trust?						
The country where you were born	6	3	2	12	3	8
The U.S.	67	81	78	43	76	56
They're about the same	19	12	14	32	11	26
[VOL] Don't Know	9	4	6	13	10	11
Q18 When it comes to letting people practice the religion they choose?						
The country where you were born	6	5	6	3	5	13
The U.S.	46	44	42	55	51	36
They're about the same	44	48	49	38	36	49
[VOL] Don't Know	4	2	3	4	8	2

	TOTAL	MEXICAN	NON MEXICAN LATINO	EUROPEAN	EAST ASIAN	CARIBBEAN
	n=1,002	*n=208*	*n=203*	*n=159*	*n=168*	*n=103*
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Q19 When it comes to having respect for people with very different lifestyles and backgrounds?						
The country where you were born	15	14	10	14	15	20
The U.S.	52	49	55	49	61	52
They're about the same	27	30	33	30	16	27
[VOL] Don't Know	6	7	3	7	8	2
Q20 When it comes to making good health care available?						
The country where you were born	18	6	8	42	16	11
The U.S.	67	82	80	37	69	79
They're about the same	11	9	10	13	11	8
[VOL] Don't Know	4	3	3	8	4	3
Q21 When it comes to people being nice to each other?						
The country where you were born	27	26	31	15	21	48
The U.S.	32	33	26	39	41	23
They're about the same	37	38	38	40	36	25
[VOL] Don't Know	4	3	5	6	3	5
Q22 When it comes to treating new immigrants well?						
The country where you were born	14	11	19	10	7	23
The U.S.	47	44	44	46	59	43
They're about the same	27	35	26	29	21	24
[VOL] Don't Know	12	11	12	15	13	11
Q23 When it comes to women's rights?						
The country where you were born	5	3	4	9	4	3
The U.S.	68	85	73	45	71	71
They're about the same	23	9	18	40	19	20
[VOL] Don't Know	5	2	5	6	7	7
Q24 Which was hardest for you personally when you FIRST came to the U.S. to live? [ROTATE]						
Dealing with discrimination and prejudice	13	15	15	7	13	20
Dealing with the paperwork regarding your immigration status	38	42	32	47	37	23
Finding work	33	31	37	30	35	40
[VOL] Don't Know	15	13	16	16	15	17

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	TOTAL	MEXICAN	NON MEXICAN LATINO	EUROPEAN	EAST ASIAN	CARIBBEAN
	n=1,002	*n=208*	*n=203*	*n=159*	*n=168*	*n=103*
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Q25 And when you first came to the U.S. to live, did you already know how to speak English well, did you know only enough to get by, or did you not speak English at all?						
Already knew how to speak English well	37	7	22	40	38	58
Knew only enough to get by	27	22	31	23	46	20
Did not speak English at all	35	71	47	37	16	20
[VOL] Don't Know	*	-	-	-	-	1
Q25A And when you first came to the U.S., which was harder for you? Was it learning to speak English well or was it:						
Base: Mentioned difficulty (Q24) AND knew only enough to get by OR did not speak English at all (Q25) [n=437]						
Learning to speak English well	52	49	54	56	55	62
Dealing with discrimination and prejudice	9	9	10	4	8	10
Dealing with paperwork regarding your immigration status	20	20	20	19	22	14
Finding work	16	18	16	16	12	10
[VOL] Don't know	3	4	1	5	3	3
[RANDOMIZE Q26-Q34] Please tell me if you agree or disagree with each of these statements about life in the U.S. Remember, it's okay if you don't know an answer. Just say so.						
Q26 A person has to work very hard in this country to make it—nobody gives you anything for free—do you agree or disagree? Is that strongly or somewhat?						
NET Strongly/Somewhat agree	81	78	77	85	79	86
Strongly agree	61	55	62	63	54	71
Somewhat agree	20	22	15	23	25	16
NET Somewhat/Strongly disagree	16	20	17	14	18	12
Somewhat disagree	10	12	10	8	11	7
Strongly disagree	6	8	6	6	7	5
[VOL] Don't Know	3	2	6	1	3	2
Q27 The U.S. needs new immigrants to do the jobs that people born in the U.S. can't or won't do—do you agree or disagree? Is that strongly or somewhat?						
NET Strongly/Somewhat agree	62	71	70	50	63	67
Strongly agree	36	43	43	30	28	47
Somewhat agree	26	28	26	20	35	20
NET Somewhat /Strongly disagree	26	23	22	35	24	22
Somewhat disagree	13	14	11	16	13	14
Strongly disagree	13	10	11	19	12	9
[VOL] Don't Know	12	6	8	15	13	11

	TOTAL	MEXICAN	NON MEXICAN LATINO	EUROPEAN	EAST ASIAN	CARIBBEAN
	n=1,002	*n=208*	*n=203*	*n=159*	*n=168*	*n=103*
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Q28 It's easy for me to hold on to my culture and traditions in the U.S.—do you agree or disagree? Is that strongly or somewhat?						
NET Strongly/Somewhat agree	81	79	76	87	78	79
Strongly agree	55	48	55	65	50	61
Somewhat agree	26	32	21	22	28	19
NET Somewhat /Strongly disagree	16	19	21	10	18	18
Somewhat disagree	10	11	12	6	11	8
Strongly disagree	6	8	9	3	7	10
[VOL] Don't Know	3	2	3	4	4	3
Q29 There's a lot more discrimination and prejudice against immigrants who are not white than against immigrants who are white—do you agree or disagree? Is that strongly or somewhat?						
NET Strongly/Somewhat agree	59	62	63	51	60	71
Strongly agree	34	38	38	30	32	47
Somewhat agree	25	25	25	21	28	24
NET Somewhat /Strongly disagree	25	29	21	27	18	15
Somewhat disagree	15	18	14	12	14	11
Strongly disagree	10	11	7	15	4	4
[VOL] Don't Know	17	8	15	22	23	15
Q30 Immigrants who speak good English have a much easier time in the U.S.—do you agree or disagree? Is that strongly or somewhat?						
NET Strongly/Somewhat agree	90	90	90	92	91	87
Strongly agree	77	76	78	74	82	74
Somewhat agree	13	14	11	18	8	14
NET Somewhat /Strongly disagree	7	9	6	6	7	9
Somewhat disagree	4	3	3	3	5	5
Strongly disagree	3	5	3	3	2	4
[VOL] Don't Know	3	1	4	3	2	4
Q31 I can trust the police to protect me and my family—do you agree or disagree? Is that strongly or somewhat?						
NET Strongly/Somewhat agree	87	88	89	83	86	77
Strongly agree	60	70	60	61	46	45
Somewhat agree	27	18	30	22	40	32
NET Somewhat /Strongly disagree	11	10	8	15	10	22
Somewhat disagree	6	6	5	9	6	13
Strongly disagree	5	4	3	6	4	10
[VOL] Don't Know	2	2	3	3	4	1

	TOTAL	MEXICAN	NON MEXICAN LATINO	EUROPEAN	EAST ASIAN	CARIBBEAN
	n=1,002	*n=208*	*n=203*	*n=159*	*n=168*	*n=103*
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Q32 Most politicians are pretty much willing to say whatever it takes in order to get themselves elected—do you agree or disagree? Is that strongly or somewhat?						
NET Strongly/Somewhat agree	78	78	78	87	74	85
Strongly agree	55	54	53	64	50	69
Somewhat agree	23	24	25	24	23	17
NET Somewhat /Strongly disagree	10	13	14	5	7	6
Somewhat disagree	7	8	11	4	6	5
Strongly disagree	3	5	4	1	1	1
[VOL] Don't Know	12	9	8	8	19	9
Q33 It's easy for immigrants to come to the U.S. illegally and live here without getting caught—do you agree or disagree? Is that strongly or somewhat?						
NET Strongly/Somewhat agree	37	35	30	48	39	34
Strongly agree	21	19	15	31	20	16
Somewhat agree	17	15	14	17	19	19
NET Somewhat /Strongly disagree	47	58	55	32	45	47
Somewhat disagree	19	27	23	13	16	25
Strongly disagree	28	32	32	20	29	23
[VOL] Don't Know	15	7	15	20	16	19
Q34 The U.S. is too pushy in how it treats other countries around the world—do you agree or disagree? Is that strongly or somewhat?						
NET Strongly/Somewhat agree	51	48	54	47	54	59
Strongly agree	26	20	27	20	31	30
Somewhat agree	25	28	26	27	23	29
NET Somewhat /Strongly disagree	36	39	35	42	32	29
Somewhat disagree	18	22	16	19	20	14
Strongly disagree	18	17	18	22	11	16
[VOL] Don't Know	14	14	11	12	14	12
Q35 Which of these two statements comes closer to your own view? [ROTATE]						
The U.S. is a unique country that stands for something special in the world	80	80	85	82	78	80
The U.S. is just another country that is no better or worse than any other	16	17	11	13	18	18
[VOL] Don't Know	4	4	4	5	4	2

	TOTAL	MEXICAN	NON MEXICAN LATINO	EUROPEAN	EAST ASIAN	CARIBBEAN
	n=1,002	*n=208*	*n=203*	*n=159*	*n=168*	*n=103*
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Q36 When it comes to immigration in the United States, do you think that our country is too open to immigrants from other countries, too closed to immigrants from other countries, or does our country strike the right balance in accepting immigrants from other countries?						
Too open to immigrants from other countries	31	27	27	41	31	36
Too closed to immigrants from other countries	13	22	14	11	10	6
Our country strikes the right balance in accepting immigrants from other countries	44	41	46	37	46	43
[VOL] Don't Know	12	9	13	11	13	16
Q37 How much do you think America's elected officials care about the issues facing immigrants—do you think they care a lot, a little, or not at all?						
Care a lot	24	34	23	18	30	12
A little	54	49	62	55	51	59
Not at all	13	14	9	14	8	19
[VOL] Don't Know	9	3	7	13	11	10
Q38 In your view, is it easy or hard for new immigrants to get a good job or do well in this country without learning English? Is that very or somewhat?						
NET Very/Somewhat easy	12	14	10	9	16	16
Very easy	4	6	4	3	2	6
Somewhat easy	8	8	6	7	13	10
NET Somewhat/Very hard	85	85	87	88	84	82
Somewhat hard	23	25	23	26	21	25
Very hard	62	59	64	62	63	56
[VOL] Don't Know	3	2	3	3	1	3
Q39 Do you think that the U.S. should expect all immigrants who don't speak English to learn it, or should this be left up to each individual to decide for themselves?						
U.S. should expect all immigrants to learn English	65	54	61	82	67	63
Should be left up to each individual to decide	31	43	37	14	30	36
[VOL] Don't Know	4	4	3	4	2	1
Q40 Do you think all public school classes should be taught in English, or do you think children of immigrants should be able to take some courses in their native language?						
All classes should be taught in English	63	51	62	73	68	53
Take some courses in their native language	32	45	34	22	28	43
[VOL] Don't Know	4	4	4	4	4	4

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	n=1,002	*n=208*	*n=203*	*n=159*	*n=168*	*n=103*
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Q41 When it comes to students who are new immigrants, is it more important for the public schools: [ROTATE]						
To teach them English as quickly as possible, even if this means they fall behind in other subjects	73	65	71	78	74	68
To teach them other subjects in their native language even if this means it takes them longer to learn English	20	26	23	16	19	24
[VOL] Don't Know	7	9	6	6	8	8
Q42 Do you think public schools today do an excellent, good, fair or poor job of teaching immigrant children to speak English as quickly as possible, or don't you know enough to say?						
NET Excellent/Good	39	61	43	22	33	38
Excellent	12	24	14	6	10	10
Good	26	37	29	17	23	28
NET Fair/Poor	27	24	30	34	23	26
Fair	16	18	19	14	17	13
Poor	10	6	11	21	6	13
Don't know enough to say	35	15	28	44	44	36
[RANDOMIZE Q43-Q49] **There are many different things people might expect from immigrants. Please tell me what YOU think should be expected of immigrants when they come to live in the U.S.**						
Q43 Becoming a citizen—is that extremely important for immigrants to do, somewhat important, or not important?						
Extremely important	68	79	78	68	56	71
Somewhat important	25	18	17	21	34	25
Not important	5	2	5	8	6	3
[VOL] Don't Know	3	1	1	3	4	1
Q44 Being able to speak and understand English—is that extremely important for immigrants to do, somewhat important, or not important?						
Extremely important	87	83	92	89	89	87
Somewhat important	12	16	8	9	11	9
Not important	1	1	-	1	-	1
[VOL] Don't Know	1	1	1	1	1	3

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	n=1,002	*n=208*	*n=203*	*n=159*	*n=168*	*n=103*
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Q45 Keeping fully informed about news and public issues—is that extremely important for immigrants to do, somewhat important, or not important?						
Extremely important	62	62	68	62	62	64
Somewhat important	32	34	29	33	30	31
Not important	3	3	2	3	4	2
[VOL] Don't Know	3	1	2	3	4	3
Q46 Serving in the military if drafted—is that extremely important for immigrants to do, somewhat important, or not important?						
Extremely important	49	50	51	54	46	51
Somewhat important	32	37	33	31	29	31
Not important	11	8	8	8	14	12
[VOL] Don't Know	8	5	8	7	11	7
Q47 To respect people from different racial or ethnic backgrounds—is that extremely important for immigrants to do, somewhat important, or not important?						
Extremely important	84	86	85	88	77	85
Somewhat important	13	12	13	11	20	11
Not important	1	1	1	1	2	2
[VOL] Don't Know	2	2	1	-	2	3
Q48 To work and stay off welfare—is that extremely important for immigrants to do, somewhat important, or not important?						
Extremely important	73	68	71	84	70	78
Somewhat important	19	24	20	12	21	15
Not important	4	4	5	3	5	5
[VOL] Don't Know	4	4	4	2	4	3
Q49 Volunteering some time to community services—is that extremely important for immigrants to do, somewhat important, or not important?						
Extremely important	47	59	48	38	49	45
Somewhat important	42	36	43	50	42	40
Not important	9	5	7	9	7	13
[VOL] Don't Know	2	1	2	3	2	3
Q50 Are you currently a U.S. citizen, or not?						
Yes, U.S. citizen	56	45	55	74	62	70
No, not a citizen	44	55	45	26	38	30
[VOL] Don't Know	*	-	-	-	-	-

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	n=1,002	*n=208*	*n=203*	*n=159*	*n=168*	*n=103*
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Q51 What year did you become a U.S. citizen?						
Base: U.S. citizen (Q50) [n=557]						
Before 1970	15	5	12	35	8	14
1970-1979	11	9	14	13	8	20
1980-1989	19	19	19	14	27	14
1990 or later	50	62	50	36	52	49
[VOL] Don't Know	5	5	5	3	6	3
Q52 Are you also a citizen of another country, or not, or are you not sure?						
Base: U.S. citizen (Q50) [n=557]						
Yes, also citizen of another country	32	35	34	37	17	23
No, not a citizen of another country	58	50	56	59	73	61
Not sure	10	15	10	4	10	17
Q53 Are you currently in the process of becoming a U.S. citizen, is it something you plan to do in the future, or is it something you do not plan to do?						
Base: Not a U.S. citizen (Q50) [n=440]						
In the process of becoming a U.S. citizen	28	29	33	19	27	28
Plan to do in the future	53	62	61	45	47	53
Do not plan to do	15	8	5	29	19	16
[VOL] Don't Know	4	1	1	7	8	3
Q54 Which of these best describes what becoming a U.S. citizen means/meant to you? Do/did you look at becoming a citizen as: [ROTATE FIRST & THIRD]						
A dream come true	34	39	39	31	33	33
Something necessary and practical	56	54	55	56	59	56
Something not so important	8	6	5	12	7	8
[VOL] Don't Know	2	1	2	1	2	3
[RANDOMIZE Q55-Q62]						
There are many reasons that people choose to become citizens. For each reason I read, please tell me if it [was/is] a major reason, a minor reason or not something you [thought about when you were becoming a citizen/would think about if you thought about becoming a citizen].						
Q55 So you would not have to worry about your immigration status—[was/is] that a major reason, a minor reason, or not a reason at all to become a citizen?						
Major reason	58	67	63	43	58	54
Minor reason	20	22	18	19	25	18
Not a reason at all	19	9	18	34	13	25
[VOL] Don't Know	3	2	1	4	4	2

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	n=1,002	*n=208*	*n=203*	*n=159*	*n=168*	*n=103*
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Q56 To get the right to vote—[was/is] that a major reason, a minor reason, or not a reason at all to become a citizen?						
Major reason	76	81	82	76	72	78
Minor reason	15	15	11	13	18	10
Not a reason at all	8	4	6	11	10	10
[VOL] Don't Know	1	-	1	1	1	2
Q57 To make it easier to bring other family members to this country—[was/is] that a major reason, a minor reason, or not a reason at all to become a citizen?						
Major reason	36	43	40	20	39	41
Minor reason	24	27	24	17	28	26
Not a reason at all	38	27	34	62	31	30
[VOL] Don't Know	3	3	3	1	2	3
Q58 To make it easier to get certain jobs—[was/is] that a major reason, a minor reason, or not a reason at all to become a citizen?						
Major reason	55	71	57	37	54	56
Minor reason	22	18	23	23	22	18
Not a reason at all	22	9	18	39	23	23
[VOL] Don't Know	2	1	3	1	1	4
Q59 To make it easier to travel in and out of the U.S.—[was/is] that a major reason, a minor reason, or not a reason at all to become a citizen?						
Major reason	51	61	50	32	54	51
Minor reason	26	22	28	32	27	22
Not a reason at all	21	15	20	36	18	26
[VOL] Don't Know	2	2	2	1	2	1
Q60 To have better legal rights and protections in the U.S.—[was/is] that a major reason, a minor reason, or not a reason at all to become a citizen?						
Major reason	70	80	78	58	73	70
Minor reason	16	16	13	16	15	15
Not a reason at all	12	3	9	25	9	12
[VOL] Don't Know	2	1	1	1	3	4
Q61 To qualify for government programs like Medicaid or food stamps—[was/is] that a major reason, a minor reason, or not a reason at all to become a citizen?						
Major reason	22	23	20	17	31	19
Minor reason	20	24	21	13	25	16
Not a reason at all	54	48	56	69	39	62
[VOL] Don't Know	4	5	3	2	6	3

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	n=1,002	*n=208*	*n=203*	*n=159*	*n=168*	*n=103*
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Q62 To show a commitment and pride in being an American—[was/is] that a major reason, a minor reason, or not a reason at all to become a citizen?						
Major reason	65	63	72	70	58	64
Minor reason	21	25	16	17	28	21
Not a reason at all	10	8	7	9	10	11
[VOL] Don't Know	5	5	5	4	5	5
Q63 In your experience, would you say that MOST of the immigrants you know in the U.S. are here legally or illegally?						
Most are here legally	71	60	68	77	81	72
Most are here illegally	17	26	22	9	10	13
[VOL] Don't Know	12	14	10	14	9	15
Q64 Please tell me if you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion about the Immigration and Naturalization Service, or the I.N.S.? Is that very or somewhat?						
NET Very/Somewhat favorable	57	65	63	44	55	62
Very favorable	23	30	21	19	23	15
Somewhat favorable	34	35	41	25	32	48
NET Somewhat/Very unfavorable	27	21	24	34	22	23
Somewhat unfavorable	14	10	15	15	14	11
Very unfavorable	12	12	9	18	9	13
[VOL] Don't Know	17	14	13	22	23	15
Q65 About how many years has it been since you had to deal with the I.N.S. directly—has it been less than a year, between 1 and 10 years, or more than 10 years?						
Less than a year	20	21	17	17	19	14
Between 1 and 10 years	37	41	40	25	40	31
More than 10 years	28	24	30	41	28	44
[VOL] I have no experience with the I.N.S.	10	10	8	13	11	7
[VOL] Don't Know	5	4	6	5	3	5
Q66 As far as you remember, was your experience dealing with the I.N.S. an overall positive one, an overall negative one, or somewhere in the middle?						
Base: Dealt with I.N.S. directly (Q65) [n=838]						
Overall positive experience	48	47	53	52	40	51
Overall negative experience	12	13	9	11	12	7
Somewhere in the middle	35	36	35	32	42	37
[VOL] Don't Know	4	5	4	5	6	6

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	%	%	%	%	%	%
Q67 Compared to when you first came to the U.S., do you think dealing with the I.N.S. is harder now, easier now, or is it about the same?						
Base: Came to live in the U.S. before 1990 (Q2) AND has dealt with I.N.S. Directly (Q65) [n=533]						
Harder	42	43	54	31	30	58
Easier	17	25	12	13	18	15
About the same	21	23	17	22	20	13
[VOL] Don't Know	21	9	17	34	32	15
Q71 Which of these things—if any—do you think is the biggest problem with the I.N.S.? [ROTATE FIRST, SECOND AND THIRD]						
Base: Dealt with I.N.S. within last 10 years (Q65) [n=560]						
The process is too long and there's too much paperwork	54	49	56	52	64	46
Workers who are disrespectful and unhelpful	15	22	16	14	12	9
Laws and regulations that are unfair	6	6	4	5	5	15
Do you think there are no serious problems with the I.N.S.?	15	17	13	16	11	26
[VOL.] Something else	4	2	4	9	1	2
[VOL] Don't Know	6	4	8	5	6	2
Q68 Has any I.N.S. worker ever treated you in a rude or disrespectful manner, or has this not happened to you?						
Base: Dealt with I.N.S. within last 10 years (Q65) [n=561]						
Yes, treated in a rude or disrespectful manner	23	22	21	22	26	24
No, this has not happened	75	74	75	77	73	76
[VOL] Don't Know	2	3	4	2	1	-
Q69 Has any I.N.S. worker ever gone out of their way to help you, or has this not happened to you?						
Base: Dealt with I.N.S. within last 10 years (Q65) [n=559]						
Yes, gone out of their way to help	27	35	28	27	22	30
No, this has not happened	69	63	69	71	71	70
[VOL] Don't Know	4	2	3	2	7	-
Q70 In general, do you think that I.N.S. workers: [ROTATE]						
Base: Dealt with I.N.S. within last 10 years (Q65) [n=557]						
Are usually respectful and do their best to help new immigrants	63	60	68	64	59	70
Are usually disrespectful and don't go out of their way to help new immigrants	22	27	16	22	22	20
[VOL] Don't Know	16	13	16	14	20	11

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	TOTAL	MEXICAN	NON MEXICAN LATINO	EUROPEAN	EAST ASIAN	CARIBBEAN
	n=1,002	*n=208*	*n=203*	*n=159*	*n=168*	*n=103*
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Q72 In your experience, are the rules and regulations of the I.N.S. basically fair or basically unfair?						
Base: Dealt with I.N.S. within last 10 years (Q65) [n=555]						
Basically fair	76	77	70	71	78	78
Basically unfair	14	17	15	16	12	13
[VOL] Don't Know	11	6	15	13	10	9
Q73 In your experience, how hard is it to get information and answers about immigration and naturalization issues from the I.N.S.? Is it easy or hard? Is that very or somewhat?						
Base: Dealt with I.N.S. within last 10 years (Q65) [n=556]						
NET Very/Somewhat easy	48	53	41	42	44	52
Very easy	21	23	19	20	18	30
Somewhat easy	27	31	23	22	27	22
NET Somewhat/Very hard	45	43	49	52	50	39
Somewhat hard	25	27	28	23	28	15
Very hard	21	16	21	28	22	24
[VOL] Don't Know	7	4	10	6	6	9
Q74 Think about immigrants who obey the laws and are here LEGALLY. Since September 11, do you feel that: [ROTATE]						
The government has not changed how it treats legal immigrants	35	28	34	43	28	37
The government is giving legal immigrants a harder time	47	66	53	31	46	43
[VOL] Don't Know	18	6	13	25	26	20
Q75 Do you feel that the government has become a lot stricter about enforcing immigration laws since September 11, a little stricter, has there been no change, or don't you know enough to say?						
A lot stricter	50	56	58	38	46	60
A little stricter	25	25	24	28	25	20
No change	7	7	4	15	3	4
Don't know enough to say	19	12	14	19	26	16
Q76 After September 11, was anyone offensive or rude to you because they saw you as an immigrant, or did this not happen to you?						
Yes, offensive or rude	9	6	9	4	4	12
No, this did not happen	90	93	89	96	95	86
[VOL] Don't Know	1	1	2	1	1	2

	TOTAL	MEXICAN	NON MEXICAN LATINO	EUROPEAN	EAST ASIAN	CARIBBEAN
	n=1,002	*n=208*	*n=203*	*n=159*	*n=168*	*n=103*
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Q77 After September 11, was anyone especially kind or sympathetic to you because they saw you as an immigrant, or did this not happen to you?						
Yes, kind or sympathetic	7	9	7	3	8	6
No, this did not happen	90	89	91	96	90	93
[VOL] Don't Know	2	1	2	2	2	1
Q78 And since September 11, have you felt that the police or law enforcement officials have been watching you more closely or picking on you because you're an immigrant, or has this not happened to you?						
Yes, have been watching more closely or picking on	9	18	10	2	4	12
No, this has not happened	90	81	88	98	95	84
[VOL] Don't Know	2	2	3	-	1	4
Q79 Thinking about the people you know and spend time with, how many would you say come from the country where you were born—a lot, some, very few, or none?						
A lot	37	59	37	21	34	44
Some	28	27	29	23	31	21
Very few	26	12	27	42	27	25
None	8	2	6	12	5	9
[VOL] Don't Know	2	1	1	3	2	1
Q80 In the past year, about how often have you telephoned family or friends in the country where you were born—at least once a week, a few times a month, a few times a year, or less than that?						
At least once a week	28	26	29	29	24	19
A few times a month	31	37	28	26	28	28
A few times a year	20	21	23	16	23	25
Less than that	21	16	21	28	24	28
[VOL] Don't Know	1	1	1	1	1	1
Q81 How often do you send money to family living in the country where you were born? Do you do this regularly, once in a while, or not at all?						
Regularly	14	21	18	3	8	21
Once in a while	30	35	36	17	31	39
Not at all	55	44	45	79	59	37
[VOL] Don't Know	1	1	1	1	2	3

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	n=1,002	*n=208*	*n=203*	*n=159*	*n=168*	*n=103*
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Q82 In general, how closely do you follow current events, such as sports or politics, in the country where you were born—very closely, somewhat closely, not too closely, or not closely at all?						
NET Very/Somewhat closely	47	54	49	42	38	53
Very closely	21	21	24	18	14	26
Somewhat closely	26	32	25	23	24	27
NET Not too/Not closely at all	52	45	49	59	60	47
Not too closely	20	19	22	21	27	15
Not closely at all	31	26	27	38	32	32
[VOL] Don't Know	2	1	3	-	3	1
Q83 Which of these is true for you: [ROTATE]						
I mostly think of myself as an American	54	45	55	67	53	49
I mostly think of myself in terms of the country where I was born	22	28	21	13	20	24
[VOL] Both equally	23	26	22	18	26	28
[VOL] Don't Know	2	1	3	2	2	-
Q84 How good would you say your English is? Do you think it is excellent, good, fair or poor? *Base: Knew only enough to get by OR did not speak English at all (Q25) [n=623]*						
NET Excellent/Good	61	49	63	75	60	61
Excellent	19	12	17	33	14	22
Good	42	37	46	42	45	39
NET Fair/Poor	39	50	37	25	39	37
Fair	30	35	27	22	34	24
Poor	10	15	10	3	6	12
[VOL] Don't Know	1	1	-	-	1	2
Q85 Would you say you can read a newspaper or book in English very well, pretty well, just a little, or not at all? *Base: Knew only enough to get by OR did not speak English at all (Q25) [n=622]*						
Very well	49	35	55	68	45	65
Pretty well	27	27	26	24	31	18
Just a little	19	24	17	8	24	15
Not at all	5	14	3	-	-	3

	TOTAL	MEXICAN	NON MEXICAN LATINO	EUROPEAN	EAST ASIAN	CARIBBEAN
	n=1,002	*n=208*	*n=203*	*n=159*	*n=168*	*n=103*
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Q86 Which do you speak MOST of the time in your home—English or your native language, or do you speak them both about the same?						
Base: Knew only enough to get by OR did not speak English at all (Q25) [n=620]						
English	29	16	18	62	30	25
Native language	39	50	47	19	34	40
Both about the same	31	33	35	20	37	35
[VOL] Some other language	*	1	-	-	-	-
Q87 Have you ever taken, or are you currently taking classes to improve your English skills, or not?						
Base: Knew only enough to get by OR did not speak English at all (Q25) [n=622]						
Yes, have taken English classes	47	47	54	30	50	48
No, have not	53	53	46	70	50	53
Q88 When it comes to health insurance, which of these best describes you:						
I have private health insurance	60	48	59	67	65	51
I have no health insurance	22	40	22	11	17	20
I have health insurance through Medicare	9	7	9	11	8	13
I have health insurance through Medicaid	4	3	4	1	3	10
[VOL] I have both Medicare and private health insurance	4	1	5	9	5	5
[VOL] Don't Know	2	2	2	1	2	2
Q89 Since you've been in the U.S., have you or has any member of your family living with you ever received food stamps, or not?						
Yes, have received food stamps	18	23	12	17	19	24
No, have not	81	76	87	82	80	76
[VOL] Don't Know	1	1	1	1	1	-
Q90 Have you or has any member of your family living with you ever received any kind of donations or free services from a charity or church in the U.S., or not?						
Yes, have received donations or free services from a charity or church	10	12	10	9	14	9
No, have not	89	87	90	89	85	89
[VOL] Don't Know	1	1	1	1	1	2

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	n=1,002	*n=208*	*n=203*	*n=159*	*n=168*	*n=103*
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Q91 Have you ever volunteered your time or contributed money to an organization or church in your community, or not?						
Yes, have volunteered time or contributed money	76	76	76	84	78	79
No, have not	23	24	24	16	22	21
[VOL] Don't Know	*	-	-	-	-	-
Q92 Have you or has any member of your family ever served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces, military Reserves, or National Guard?						
Yes, have served in the U.S. Armed Forces	26	21	31	38	24	35
No, have not	73	78	69	62	75	64
[VOL] Don't Know	1	1	1	1	1	1
Q93 Are you the parent of any children who are under 18 years old, or not?						
Yes, parent of child under 18 years old	45	63	47	31	42	40
No, not a parent of child under 18 years old	54	37	53	69	58	59
[VOL] Don't Know	*	1	-	-	-	1
Q94 How likely do you think it is that any of these children would want to live in the country where you were born? Is it likely or unlikely? Is that very or somewhat?						
Base: Parent of child under 18 (Q93) [n=451]						
NET Very/Somewhat likely	23	29	17	22	17	27
Very likely	11	14	7	18	6	7
Somewhat likely	12	15	10	4	11	20
NET Somewhat/Very unlikely	70	67	74	65	76	63
Somewhat unlikely	19	16	22	25	17	12
Very unlikely	51	52	52	41	59	51
[VOL] Don't Know	8	4	10	12	7	10
Q95 Were any of these children born in the United States, or not?						
Base: Parent of child under 18 (Q93) [n=453]						
Yes, children born in the U.S.	84	89	87	74	80	90
No, they were not	16	12	13	27	20	10
[VOL] Don't Know	*	-	-	-	-	-
Q96 Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, Democrat, Independent or something else?						
Republican	21	14	26	29	25	20
Democrat	35	33	36	32	26	47
Independent	19	21	20	22	19	13
Something else	11	12	9	7	9	12
[VOL] Don't Know	15	20	9	10	22	9

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	%	%	%	%	%	%
Q97 Do you lean toward the Republican or Democratic party, or do you not lean either way?						
Base: Independent (Q96) [n=177]						
Republican	10	2	8	18	13	-
Democrat	24	29	18	18	20	8
Don't lean either way	64	68	67	65	67	83
[VOL] Don't Know	2	-	8	-	-	8
Q98 Which party do you think cares more about immigrants and the issues they face—the Republican party, the Democratic party, or are they both about the same?						
Republican party	8	7	10	5	9	12
Democratic party	31	27	32	34	27	42
Both about the same	37	48	38	39	35	28
[VOL] Neither party cares	4	3	5	3	3	6
[VOL] Don't Know	20	15	16	20	26	12
Q99 Please stop me when I read your current employment status.						
Working outside the home full time	49	53	56	40	51	48
Working outside the home part time	9	9	11	7	8	14
Self-employed	11	11	10	13	10	6
A homemaker	9	16	6	10	6	5
Retired	12	4	11	23	8	20
Unemployed but not retired	3	2	3	1	4	4
A student	7	5	5	5	12	4
[VOL] Don't Know	1	-	-	1	1	-
Q100 What is the highest level of school you completed?						
Less than High School	14	35	15	8	4	11
High School graduate	23	35	23	18	18	28
Some College or Trade School, no degree	17	13	22	21	16	24
Associate's or 2-year degree	10	6	12	9	14	11
Bachelor's or 4-year degree	22	8	17	27	29	16
Graduate/Professional degree	13	2	10	17	17	10
[VOL] Don't Know	1	-	1	-	1	-
Q101 What is your age?						
18-34	36	46	36	19	37	35
35-49	33	37	34	24	39	24
50-64	19	16	20	36	14	20
65+	11	2	11	22	10	21
[VOL] Don't Know	1	1	-	-	-	-

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	n=1,002	*n=208*	*n=203*	*n=159*	*n=168*	*n=103*
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Q102 Do you consider yourself Hispanic, white, black or African American, Asian or something else?						
Hispanic	36	97	75	2	1	31
White	26	2	11	92	2	7
Black/African American	9	-	9	3	-	52
Asian	23	-	3	1	94	3
Something else (Specify)	4	1	3	3	2	7
[VOL] Don't Know	1	-	-	-	1	-
Q103 I'm going to read some ranges of annual household income. Please stop me when I read the one that describes your total household income in 2001.						
$15,000 or Under	16	22	17	13	12	18
$15,001 to $25,000	15	21	21	6	13	16
$25,001 to $35,000	16	19	15	17	15	19
$35,001 to $50,000	13	14	14	11	12	19
$50,001 to $75,000	13	6	11	8	14	14
Over $75,000	18	5	12	38	24	7
[VOL] Don't Know	10	12	10	7	10	8
Q104 May we call you back another day if we have a quick follow-up question?						
Yes, you may call back	93	96	95	95	90	94
No, you may not	6	3	5	5	8	6
[VOL] Don't Know	1	1	-	-	2	-
Gender						
Male	49	51	50	48	46	43
Female	51	50	50	52	54	57
Urbanicity						
Rural	3	6	3	3	1	3
Suburban	46	46	48	47	48	34
Urban	52	48	50	51	51	63
Region						
Northeast	25	1	34	33	16	59
Midwest	4	1	2	8	3	1
South	24	32	33	23	16	30
West	47	66	32	36	66	10

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63

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